>> PHIL WEILER: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to a fifth in our series of COVID-19 town hall meetings. My name is Phil Weiler, and I will serve as the moderator for this hour. I serve as Vice President for communications here at Washington State. I'm going to welcome everybody who is joining us. These meetings have consistently had thousands of people joining, and they are connecting from all of our campuses from around the state, our extension offices, research facilities all over the country, and in at least one case, we received a question today from a person who is from Sri Lanka. Great to have so many folks joining us. We're going to follow a similar process to the past. I'm joined by four members of our panel. I will introduce them in a second. And also we have other folks who are helping out with live questions in the live chat. I will talk about that just before we get started.

As I said, I'm joined today by Kirk Schultz, president. Bryan Slinker, Theresa Elliot and Stacy Pearson. We have collected questions and as of this morning, we had 18 pages of questions. We will get to as many of those questions as we can. As I mentioned, if a question comes to mind while we're talking, please feel free to use the live chat feature. I'm looking at that right now and already seeing folks who are connecting via that live chat. We will again have subject matter experts who are monitoring those questions, and if at all possible, either answering the questions live or pointing folks to resources where they can get more information.

So with that, let's get started. As I said, we have a lot of interest and a lot of questions. The first thing I would like to do is ask president Schultz to talk to us a little about what the plans are in the fall there are a lot of people who are not still sure what we're thinking about doing in the fall. This would be a good opportunity for us to lay the ground work if where we think we're going and what we think the fall is going to look
like.

>> KIRK SCHULZ: Thank you and good morning. Before I start talking about our fall 2020 plans, WSU, we have a history of working hard to develop an inclusive and diverse environment throughout the WSU system at all of our campuses, extension centers, student group, faculty, staff, and alumni. Our communities of color this morning are hurting across the nation as we watch the reaction to several deaths that have occurred recently by African-Americans. We want to continue to make sure that we're setting a standard in the state of Washington for how we work with diversity, equity, and inclusion. We pledge to work with police in our local areas to make sure that we are not just showing sympathy for that pain right now in our communities of color, but we're setting an example.

So this morning, for those of you watching, for our faculty, staff, students, alumni, anybody associated with WSU and our communities of color, our heart goes out to you, and we're pledging to continue to do the best we can to improve to do things differently and to make a difference moving forward.

So Phil, as we talk about restarting for fall 2020, we got lots of questions about what that's going to look like. What I want to do is go through a few items that some will be repetitive, but some may be a little bit different as we continue to work in this particular area.

First, and I always want to emphasize this: Safety of our faculty, staff, and students is of paramount concern. We start talking about logistical things. That is a part of our conversation all the time, and will continue to be so. I also, we received lots of questions and we still get questions, what are the plans for fall 2020. And I just want to reiterate, our plans are for in-person experiences at all of our campus locations for fall of 2020. As I have said before and will continue to repeat, the experience for fall 2020 is going to look different at all of our campus locations. We are working on it and we will continue to keep everybody informed as our planning moves forward.

We work hard to make sure that we're communicating across the higher education sector in Washington and the Pacific northwest, so that we're bringing the best ideas not just from WSU, but from all of our campuses, all of our locations, from California and Arizona and other places, what's working there, what they're thinking, we're also thinking.

One of the first steps before worrying about students coming on to campus is how do we safely bring our employees back to our different campus locations? This has to be done in conjunction with the department of health in different areas, and Theresa Elliot has put together a comprehensive plan that we're going to start sharing next week on how to safely bring people back to campuses, how to maintain social distances in the workplace, where people can report issues or challenges or things where they don't feel safe or there's concerns that we need to be aware of.

So we will pledge to put that out and make sure that people have a clear
written set of guidelines on what it needs to look like when people return to work if they choose to do so.

We're also committed to reopening our research Enterprise. And just last week there was a town hall on research and scholarly activity at WSU, and what that restart also needs to look like. That draft plan is out there available for people to look at now. And that's an important part of us also reengaging and continuing to expand our in-person operations prior to the fall semester. We're doing all of this in conjunction with the governor and guidance from the state. I always want to make sure that I let the other Cougs know that we're not doing this independently or on our own. We're doing it in conjunction with public health care professionals and so forth.

We're also working to develop our in-house COVID-19 testing capabilities in Pullman that will work for the entire WSU system through the college of veterinary medicine. We have mentioned that before. We're continuing to ramp that up. It will be important for our fall in-person experiences to be able to do rapid testing in a format that's close by that we can get those results quickly. And that's continuing to move forward. We will clearly also need to have contact tracing. It will be done with a phone app. If you say that's great, what phone app are we going to use? We don't know. Right now there's five or six different ones out there. We will evaluate those and we will let the community know well in advance what that needs to look like. But there will be developments for the contact tracing that will be an integral part of our in-person plans for the fall.

We'll have a cleaning protocol in place, whether it's a classroom or we have an event somewhere, what that looks like. And if for many of you who are out there and counting Pullman as a face, too, those cleaning protocols are in place for restaurants and other types of things. We'll have to make sure we design the ability to do that into our schedules.

We will work on what our residence hall population looks like in terms of number of people per room and things like that. I know people want to know that. It will be the middle of June before we make final decisions on what those look like, and we'll make sure we communicate those.

We will also be working closely with our colleagues in the Pullman community, in the Vancouver community, the tri-cities community as we come back. It's not just what are we doing on our campuses, it's what are we doing in the area where our students, our faculty, and our staff are coming from. And I want people to feel some confidence that we can have everything do done on our campus location, but if we don't work with partners and colleagues surrounding our campuses, it's going to be really hard to have the environment that we think is so careful.

And finally, out there there are lots of changes proposed at different institutions to the academic calendar to minimize travel and things like that. As much as I wish I could just snap my fingers and make it happen, these things require careful
consideration. It requires looking and talking with our faculty, our faculty leadership. It involves our accreditation, class days and things like that. I will just say that we are engaging in those conversations to look like what we could do with our academic calendar this next year to again, just put us in a position to be safe and successful in the fall 2020 semester. Finally, we'll put a publication, a letter out to the general WSU community next week that has more of these details in there. I will say, and I know we'll have some questions, that people want to know details. They want to know exactly what we're going to do and how. And we want to make sure that we're careful with our communication, that we don't contradict ourselves, that we don't put out one thing and put out something else the next week. So I realize people want to know more. They want to know it quickly. And we're going to continue to pledge to put out high-quality, carefully thought out planning documents and communications through video, social media, these kind of things, all through the summer. We will make sure that by the time fall gets here, people say they have done it well. They have communicated well. And we feel good about the environment that we're going to teach in, that we're going to work in, that we're going to learn in, and that we're going to live in.

So lots there. That's more than I probably want to talk at one time, but lots of activities going on. Our planning is going well. We're going to be ready for an exceptional fall 2020 in-person experience at all of our campuses.

>> PHIL WEILER: That's helpful. Bryan, I'm going to address this question to you. There has been a lot of work that's been done lately on how we do a slow phased re-introduction to research. I know that that's a big concern to investigators, researchers across the system. There was work, as president Schulz mentioned on mining. We have got one big last hurdle to get over before we can share those. Can you give us an update on the research guidelines and if people want to learn more, where they should go?

>> BRYAN SLINKER: Thank you, and thank you everyone for tuning in. I will acknowledge that I wore the wrong shirt today for a video conference. If you are seeing my stripes, I apologize for that.

So for research, this planning has been led out of the office of research under Vice President Keen, who is charged with a task force led by Lee Lauflin. There are lots of iterations of the draft, and what we consider the final draft is done. The reason I call it a final draft is that we recognize that no matter where we think we are done, the conditions will change dynamically that may change our guidance. The document is created as a dynamic document. The first version of that is ready to go. That doesn't mean we're ready to start turning people loose in the labs now. These plans are approved as consistent with public health guidelines. The process is ongoing in multiple communication channels with both county and state government.

Once we feel like we have the go ahead, then we're ready to go. So draft one is done. It's the guidance we're going to start with. But we will start as soon as we get
the go ahead for public health authorities. And starting means there will be an initial period of about a week where we have a very structured, staged re-introduction and where plans are approved and posted. A lot of this is outlined in the previous discussions and town hall. And it's all available on the office of research website. So we're ready to go from our perspective. As soon as we get approval, there will be a few days of structured, getting ready to go, and then we'll begin to ramp up as soon as possible.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you. I think that team did a really good job of thinking through all the issues that need to be addressed before we can begin to start repopulating those labs. If you are interested and not had a chance to see the current draft, there are links to it, and like I said, I think it's a good document.

I'm going to use that as a segue to ask a question of Theresa. You and your team have been preparing guidelines for what a safe and phased reintroduction to the workplace looks like. And I know that that work isn't done, but could you give us a preview of what those guidelines might look like and just provide any other information? I think I will say that as I looked again at the questions, a lot of folks are anxious, thinking that they're going to have to be returning to the workplace before they may be ready, based on their own personal situations. Could you share the guidelines and maybe hit some highlights for us?

>> THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: Yes, we are working in collaboration with SMEs, developing a general guide for a safe return to work. A guide that won't cover everybody's special needs in labs and some of the other high-volume areas where there's sensitivity, but for the general population, we're working on a guide that will address the primary issues such as number one, employees who can work from home and telework will continue to do so through phases two and three. And I know that's a common question we're getting on the chat. And I want to assure everyone that's going to be one of the primary concerns when an area is deciding who to bring back to the workplace, the first question is going to be can they perform that work at home? And that answers that question. They shouldn't be being brought back to work.

But we're establishing guides regarding social distancing, hygiene, those important considerations to ensure the workplace is safe and in accordance with the local health officials and the phase that's in place for the county. So it will be a general guide, but in addition to that, the area of supervisors, managers, decision-makers are going to have to be considering what phase the county is in and any other directives from the local health officials. Those will be the priorities as we move to slowly phase employees back into WSU work locations.

>> PHIL WEILER: So what I heard you say is if work can be done from home at this stage, it will be done at home? Is that right?

>> Yes.

>> Do you have a sense of timing?
>> THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: Sometime next week. The guidelines will include mandatory training that all WSU employees will take. A very short training that we're working with environmental health and safety on. Five or ten minutes for our online system. A quick training video. And there are some other possible requirements for working on that employees will need to take if they're required to come back into WSU work locations. So hopefully the guides will be ready next week. And I'll add the disclaimer that it's a general guide. For other areas, you will have additional stipulations that you will need to adhere to in accordance to labor and industry requirements for the specific work performed.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you. Kirk, I'm going to ask this question of you. There's been a lot of questions and concerns about what our budget situation's going to look like next year. Can you address that and maybe if you have specific questions, we can have Stacy look at those?

>> KIRK SCHULZ: Yeah. I'm concerned like everybody else what our budget's going to look like next year. Just to provide some background, we were asked by the state of Washington to start doing scenario planning for a particular cut. They asked for a 15% cut, and by the time you translate that to our budget at WSU, that constitutes a 10% reduction. Now this is an exercise. The state has not mandated that we have to give back a certain amount of money at this particular point. So it's a scenario planning exercise.

We announced this to the campus community in a broad communication, and now we have a process that we're going to go through. So we gave everybody about a week to ten days to put together their proposals of how that would be handled. We asked chancellors, Vice Presidents, and deans to all put together what that scenario would look like for their particular units. Those are being submitted to Stacy Pearson, and she can talk about this in a minute. There's a similar format that we're asking people to do so we are getting same data and information. Then we will have a meeting where we're asking everybody to actually verbally present that to other leaders across campus to talk about why they might choose to do what they would do and what the impacts are on that unit. I want to make it perfectly clear to everybody who's watching this, we cannot take a 10% base budget reduction and not have major implications for what we're able to do with faculty, staff, students, in the state of Washington. There's not that much fluff out there. So when people talk about what the impact could be on their particular units, it's gonna be dramatic. And it's gonna affect people. It's gonna affect what we can do with students. It's gonna affect how we operate in the state. So that, we understand and we're asking people to help us with that.

After we do those presentations, what we want to do is take the best ideas, put several scenarios together, and then share that with the cabinet to come up with a proposal basically that would be made to me as president.

That particular point, we'll look at it. Put together what we think we need to
do, should do. And then at that point have visits with faculty Senate leadership, with APAC leadership, with student leadership, and a broad-based communication to the campus community. That will probably take us to mid-July. And so, if folks are concerned and think something's gonna happen next week or that we're -- we've got this all done and we know what that's gonna look like, we're going through a very appropriate process to make sure we evaluate what's important, how we use the criteria in the principles that were put out to the campus community, and then make some decisions at that particular point. Once we get additional guidance from the state on what our target really needs to be. And I want to continue to emphasize the entire community that this is an exercise at this point. We know we're going to see some reduced revenues, but we don't know how much that's going to be, and we don't know what impact, for example, additional federal dollars could have with that fiscal situation and what it looks like. I understand impatience and people want to know details. When we have details, we will provide them. But at this particular point, we are providing a campus community everything that we know in the time that we know it, and we'll keep that communication line going open through social media, through these, and through campus communications periodically during the summer. And that's going to be an important step here.

I would always ask rumors are probably the worst sort of thing around these budget times and as I have mentioned before, please, please talk to your supervisors, your deans, Vice Presidents, whatever, when you hear budget rumors or you hear something's going to happen. Let us know when you hear those things so we can determine and let you know, is that accurate? Is that occurring? Is that true? And keeping that rumor mill to a minimum is going to be really critical for us. And that means president, the provost, Vice President for finance and administration, deans and other academic leaders have to be communicating on a regular basis with people on their campus locations as to what they're thinking, what they're planning, and what time lines are. And we're committed to do that.

>> PHIL WEILER: If I could piggy back on that. The president mentioned there was a 10% exercise that we're doing. I have also heard that other state agencies are having to do a 15% exercise to figure out what a reduction would look like for them. Can you clarify for me what the difference is between what Washington state university needs to do and why that might be different than other state agencies?

>> STACY PEARSON: Sure. As we get our budget and we work with the state, there's also the inclusion of tuition into what is our referred to as our PBL, our permanent budget line. That's how we came up with, based on utilizing PBL, something that speaks to all of the areas on our campus, is that that would translate into about a 10% scenario. And so each area -- so all of the campuses, the chancellors, the deans, and the Vice Presidents have been given that target as it relates to what their current operating budget is. And that enables them, then, to identify what scenarios that they
would utilize to meet this reduction. So in general, universities are different than other state agencies because those tuition revenues are included in that state budget.

>> PHIL WEILER: So I heard you say that other than just state appropriation, we also get tuition, which helps ameliorate the reduction in funding?

>> STACY PEARSON: Yes, and we have to watch enrollment and tuition side. We are modeling different types of enrollment scenarios for the fall. And all of this will come together as we review our budget and make our decisions.

>> PHIL WEILER: Bryan, this is something that I received in the prepared questions, and I'm also seeing it in the chat. I feel like we need to reemphasize this so people are clear. The question that we received in advance was, Are we still planning to go back to a normal schedule for fall 2020? Or will we have to resort to having an online or hybrid schedule?

>> BRYAN SLINKER: I will answer that and follow on to the general points that Kirk made. The simple answer is we will not have full face-to-face in the fall. That we are currently in phase 2. We're likely to be in phase 3 at best for the fall. We don't know that. So our planning parameters are that large lecture classes are going to have to be distanced. Now we have to define "large," and consistent with other PAC 12, Kirk is on calls with other PAC 12 presidents and I'm on calls with other PAC 12 provosts. Colleagues and networks at other PAC 12 institutions and beyond, and the numbers we're hearing from our PAC 12 counter parts is that class sizes will be in some institutions, 25, and others will be 50 for face-to-face classes. So we will fall likely somewhere in that range based on what we're thinking now. We have determined that we cannot use more than 25% of any classroom capacity and feel like we can keep people safe. And again, as Kirk said, safety is paramount here in our minds.

And so those are general planning parameters. It's clear that large classes will be distanced. It breaks larger classes into larger groups that fit within face-to-face size limitations. We hope to have those nailed down firmly in the next week or two. A lot of the specifics are going to take more time, which classes and which rooms. We have a room inventory. We know what the technical logical capabilities are in these rooms. And we have to put that together with class size limitations. We know we have to disinfect, as Kirk mentioned. We have disinfection protocols and we have to disinfect between classes. It's all coming together. There are thousands of moving parts that we're trying to pull together. The generalities are becoming more and more clear.

Another thing that's also clear in terms of planning is even if the class could be face to face with 25, we also know that there are faculty or instructional support staff who are in high-risk groups and perhaps, you know, shouldn't be in the classroom. Or their family circumstance, we don't know what K-12 education looks like, day care looks like for our employees. So even if a class could meet in terms of our design parameters, safety parameters, based on the instructor, they still may need to be distanced.
So there will be a lot of distance. And the focus will be on face-to-face for the small classes that uniquely benefit from face-to-face or require special equipment. So things like labs, studio, recitations are more likely the things that we will see as face to face. And small to moderate sized classes. I will also say that within these general parameters, there may be some college specific differences or campus-specific differences. But we're all trying to conform as a system within these general design parameters that ensure safety as best we can. And allow some flexibility for individual circumstances or unique circumstances with courses.

So that's really where we're at. The generalities are drawn. The specifics of what class and what classrooms, that will take a little bit longer to figure out. But I'm confident that we're on a pathway that we can sustain. And if we couple that with, as Kirk mentioned, intentional of Thanksgiving being a cut-off point for the semester, whether we actually shorten the semester has not been determined. That's hard. Financial aid is affected. Course syllabi are affected. We can probably find ways to creatively ramp down the semesters don't have to come back after Thanksgiving. That's a design goal. We haven't gotten there yet.

But whatever we do in the classroom will help facilitate that design goal as well.

>> PHIL WEILER: I want to dig deeper on the question on potentially changing the schedule for the fall semester. I know some universities have announced that's their intent. They would start in August and they would conclude their face-to-face around Thanksgiving. What's the advantage of that thinking?

>> BRYAN SLINKER: The main driver is we're in winter. We're anticipating we have a flu season. We have winter weather. We don't know what a COVID rebound might look like. So one of the main drivers is just recognizing heading into winter, everything else being equal, it's probably better not to have students on campus during flu season. It minimizes the chance we get into difficulty and can wind up the semester in a more orderly fashion according to plan rather than what happened with the spring semester. It's not guaranteed, but there's a lot of public health considerations that guide us to thinking that we would ramp down as we head into winter. We have two weeks of instruction and one week of finals after Thanksgiving break, so there's not much of the semester left. We already start early, so the institutions that are starting early, we have already started early, and it's probably not feasible for us to move the start date up. So we're looking at what happens on the bottom end of the semester. And getting three weeks chapped off? Probably not. We're more likely to, since more things are likely to be distanced already, we're more likely to wind down those things that are face to face in an orderly fashion. Project work and papers and things like that, that don't require on-campus presence, and wind down the semester in an orderly fashion so Thanksgiving is about the last we have students in Pullman.

Now other campuses across the system, we're going to try to keep consistent
calendars, but there might be slight deviations that are unique to campuses. They are in different counties and different opportunities and challenges. Again, very general, and I emphasize that no decisions have been made yet. Having opportunities not hear in the winter in terms of public health is probably a very good thing. That may mean we start spring a week or two late. We don't have to make decisions about spring, but avoiding winter is the main goal.

>> KIRK SCHULZ: And if I may add, you will know what the calendar looks like before the semester starts. As Bryan and his team work on what things can look like, I want people to feel confident that when we say here is what the term is gonna look like, we have every intention of following through on that assuming that we can manage the COVID-19 things, which I think we will be in good shape with. This is not one of those where we're asking people to say start in faith in August, and we'll make a decision as the semester goes. This would be something that would be put in place before people arrive so for travel plans, housing, all of those things, people know well in advance what the semester is going to look like. I think that's a key part.

>> PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. So what I heard you say is we have not made a decision, but it's something we're actively looking at. Theresa, I'm going to direct the next question to you. The question has to do with this idea of whether it's during the summer time period or in the fall semester, what happens if you're a faculty member or a staff member who may have young children or elderly parents at home. Will they have to be in the classroom or office? Or will there be flexibility?

>> THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: We are working on flexibility. Emphasizing that the priority will be working remotely or working, teleworking through phases 2 and 3 for all possible situations. There's also protections or guidelines in place for a variety of health conditions for individuals as well as their family members. And there's currently guidance out there for employees who are at home with their K-12 kids. And so there's a wealth of information out on our website on each of those topics. But again, I think working with our areas and faculty and staff, everyone wants what's best for our employees. And the priority is going to be working from home whenever possible.

>> PHIL WEILER: Great. That's just good for us to remind ourselves of that. Bryan, I'm going to address this next question to you. Someone noted that other schools have created task forces to address COVID-19 and to help with the planning for what the fall semester is going to look like. Can you share with us some of the groups that have been formed at WSU to take a look at the questions?

>> BRYAN S LINKER: Sure. I can try. There are several. One thing I want to emphasize is even though there are several groups that have specific charges or areas of responsibility related to COVID-19, much of the planning we're talking about whether it's what instruction looks like, what Theresa has been talking about with general return to work. What Levi and Chris Keen did on the research return. Those planning efforts are in the normal planning of the university. Theresa is there. What we are trying to
coordinate and the thousands of moving parts that are naturally -- we're still in an emergency response with a command structure. That's shifted a little bit in how we think about the executive policy group that's mandated by that incident command structure. This is shifting more to a broader role for the president's cabinet as we do this.

There's several that plan to announce soon some communication about operational planning groups that try to pull these threads together into a cohesive plan. I'm working with the deans, faculty, Mary Wak is working with associate deans. Within our purview as Vice Presidents, vice provosts, we are working with our teams to plan.

We're all supported in our planning by the public health emergency task force that's chaired by Owen Taylor, social Vice President of student affairs. That task force pre-existed COVID-19 and precisely for the purpose of emergency planning like this that it existed. And it's taking on a lot of the planning that we're doing and implementation. We're also supported extensively by AOI, academic outreach innovation, under chancellor Dave Slay. That team is working -- there's ten planning groups working over the summer with faculty. Over 400 faculty engaged with the ten different groups that are looking at various aspects of what the fall looks like. So they're not looking at the issues about what's the class size, what's the cleaning protocol. They're looking at how do we improve our assessments online? How do we build online modules to help support a flipped classroom? More pedagogical approaches to being effective in teaching. And all of this is supported by, I think we have mentioned before, the scientific or technical advisory group led by reagin professor. So they are looking to model for us, if we want to achieve the goal class sizes of 50, if we want to achieve that goal, certain occupancy in dorms, what would our testing strategy, quarantine strategy, or contact tracing strategy need to look like to support that goal?

So there's a variety of planning groups. We've all struggled, I think. I'll just say that. The honest opinion among us all is we've struggled some to pull all of these planning threads together, and we're getting better at it. I know everybody wants answers to very specific questions right now. I do, too. We all do. But this is an extremely strange planning environment. We're doing amazingly well, I think. But we are shifting to learning as we go and coordinating this better. And the right groups are doing the right things operationally for plans. And we're getting better at pulling those threads together so that we can think about risk management and think about our messaging to the governor or the county and so on as we develop these plans.

>> KIRK SCHULZ: I would say, Phil, to add on to that, in the end of spring semester, post-spring break, we were essentially having to sprint. We pulled together groups quickly because we had to make decisions really, really quickly. And what we're doing now, and I say "we," the leadership of the institution, is we're shifting from kind of
a sprint to a long-distance race. We realized that it's not just COVID-19, but the fiscal implications mean we're not just looking at how do we manage our budget over the next four weeks. We're looking at how do we manage our budget over the next two to three years. We want to make sure that we put some of these planning groups in place and have representation from our faculty, staff, students, and things like that that are a bit more of a permanent structure as opposed to something that we will stand up with a particular task. So as an example, Stacy will be co-leading a group to work on the university fiscal picture, co-leading we Liz Beth Chilton as she comes in as as our provost. That is not a temporary group. It's a work that will be working on budgetary structures across the system for a while that'ill have representation from across campus. So some of those are in a transition time where we're moving from groups we stood up really quickly to groups that are looking at longer-term implications. And that's created a little messiness right now. And as Bryan said, we're getting better at pulling strands together. We want to make sure that we don't have planning groups overlapping with each other and wasting people's time because we've got three groups looking a the same thing. That's really important for us to do to respect people's time, efforts, energy, and creativity. We we will continue to communicate. But I want people to understand that we're transitioning into a little bit of a longer time frame. And we don't have as many overnight decisions that have to be made.

>> BRYAN SLINKER: And I would also like to emphasize that the fact that the operational planning that we're doing is unlike what we have had to do because of the disease and the government response and public health response to the disease. But still, much of the planning is still, again, within the normal operational organization of the university. So colleges are looking at how they're going to teach at a college level and coming up with college-level ideas about what's going to work best for them trying to collect those up into the cohesive view of what's going to work best for the university. So the planning happening at normal operational levels. And we're getting better at pulling the pieces together. Not perfect yet. Maybe never will be. But we're getting better at pulling the pieces together. And it's beginning to gel. The past few days, I have felt as confident as I have in a long time that this is gelling in this weird planning environment.

>> PHIL WEILER: Bryan, I'm glad you mentioned the 400 faculty members working, looking at what are the lessons learned from the quick move from face to face to online. That addressed one question that I thought was worth mentioning. Somebody asked the question, what are we doing to learn from this situation, and how is it going to impact how we deliver instruction in the future. And I think you, like I said, you referenced the fact that we do have ten different groups of faculty who are looking at the lessoned learned and figure out how do we improve what we do because of the situation that we have to go through?

Stacy, I'm going to piggy back on something that was mentioned that was a question that we received. It's worth reiterating. This person said will the 10% reduction
exercise run from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021? Or are we looking for a longer recovery time? Can you provide some framework on those issues?

>> STACY PEARSON: Yes, thanks. That's a very good question. If we go back to the governor's memo a couple of weeks ago, he's pretty much referring to the next three years. So that's the second half of the current fiscal year '21, which is referenced in your question. But then the bianeum following. And I think it's important to realize that because of the short turn-around for this upcoming fiscal year, some of the actions that we do in the current fiscal year to meet these targets will look different or some will look different than that longer term we have provided guidance to the campus to consider what those impacts might be in the second and third year of this process. Keeping in mind how the temporary reductions might play out in future years.

The other thing we have is in the current year, many people have heard about emergency funds that we're receiving through federal and possibly from state. Obviously as we go through this budget scenario, we are also looking at those one-time tools that we can activate in order to help us through the initial year. So we are looking at programs that we would administer university-wide, where we might gain savings or get additional revenue so that we can put all of those together once we look at the scenarios that all of the areas provide.

>> PHIL WEILER: Great. Bryan, another question for you. I think I heard you mention this. So I will put you on the spot to see if you can remember all of the specific statistics. But this person is asking are there any statistics yet on how students chose to end their spring 2020 semester? For example, what percentage of students chose to take pass/fail? What kind of involvement did we see during those last couple of weeks of the semester where students were online versus face-to-face? Like I said, I know I'm putting you on the spot. Do you recall what some of that information was?

>> BRYAN SLINKER: Well, I thought you might put me on the spot with that, so yes, I can. Because I have this paper right in front of me.

So you may remember that we extended the deadline for students to choose pass/fail to June 1, so that's Monday. So we don't have the final, final statistics. But as we ended the semester, there were a little over 1,000 students that had taken advantage to shift to pass/fail grading. We don't know how much that will shift before Monday. Withdrawals from the term were actually lower this semester than they were in the previous semester. Very few students dropped classes and consistent with what happened, fewer students actually withdraw from classes overall in the spring than in spring of 2019. What we saw an increase in spring 2020 compared to 2019 is that a lot more use of incomplete grades and X grades, which was somewhat predictable from the disruptions, switching rapidly to distance. There was more need for students to compensate by taking incompletes. We'll see how those clear. The other thing that is also important that this is a statistic that I just learned. The academic deficiency, are there more students in academic deficiency and what's going to happen with
them. Almost identical. Only 2% higher than our recent lowest year. And again, with the shift to pass/fail grading, not completed until June, that statistic may change slightly. So, the surveys that we've done of students, which are as you mentioned, guiding the work and the faculty work and getting ready for the fall. And anticipations of the fall and their experiences, again, nothing was perfect. But the numbers suggest that students stay engaged. That was also, for the most part, the faculty impression during the last six weeks of the semester. And that we had no increase in withdrawals, academic deficiencies compared to the year before. We just had a lot more incomplete and X grades as the semester wound down with the disruptions.

>> PHIL WEILER: Well, that's great news that students -- I think that shows the resiliency of our students that they were able to make that switch and still be successful with very little notice. I have to say I'm very relieved that you were prepared for that question, because I didn't ask you about it in advance. So thanks for not having to be put on the spot.

I'm going to switch gears to talk more about the budget situation. Obviously COVID-19 is gonna impact state tax collections, which is gonna impact the appropriation that WSU receives in future years. So there's a couple of questions about that. I wanted to address to you, Theresa, something was asking as our financial situation gets clarified, is there a chance that the university might offer incentives for early retirement? I understand there's a process that has to happen. Can you talk about the process and what the thinking is around early retirement incentives?

>> THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: I will respond to the idea that all considerations are being considered at this time. There has not been a decision on any hard decision on any of those processes. As to the specifics, my understanding is we would have to make a proposal and the state would have to approve it before we could talk about it, about an early retirement incentive program.

>> PHIL WEILER: Thank you. That was my understanding as well. It's not a tool that we get to exercise unilaterally. We really need approval from the state level. So thank you. Stacy, I have a different question that appeared in the questions that were pre-submitted. Do we anticipate civil service staff will still be receiving the small raises in July that have been provided by the legislature in the past?

>> STACY PEARSON: Thank you for that question. We have not been notified that that has not going to happen. So at this point in time, that plan continues forward.

>> PHIL WEILER: And remind me, so that was something that was approved be I the state legislature; is that correct?

>> STACY PEARSON: That's correct.

>> PHIL WEILER: Great. Another question. This may be for Theresa or perhaps Bryan. As businesses across the state are slowly reopening, one of the things that we're seeing are plexi-glass shields between front counter staff and customers and
the like. This person was asking if we have given any thought to doing anything like that?

>> THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: Go ahead, Bryan.

>> BRYAN SLINKER: Well, yes. I hope that was the answer Theresa was going to give. And in fact, the areas are already working with technical services to manufacture those within WSU at Pullman for use by those offices that that would be a security measure that would be helpful for them.

>> THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: I will just add that there's been communications going out to the areas to begin planning for social distancing and those requirements. So a lot of areas are already making those adjustments, including whatever type of guards they may want to put in place.

>> PHIL WEILER: That was a bit of a trick question. I know one of my team members has a front counter, and they have a facility that is open, so they already do have something like that in place. So to answer the question for the person who asked, yes, we definitely are already producing those. I think that's going to be part of those guidelines that we see as we get closer to that slow phased reopening. I'm looking at the time. We've only got a couple minutes left. I think if we could, I'm going to turn it back to president Schulz and see if we have closing comments before we end the hour.

>> KIRK SCHULZ: Thank you, Phil. And once again, I want to express my appreciation to everyone who tuned in and everybody who submitted questions in advance. That helps us make sure that we're prepared and that we think about our answers ahead of time and things like that. So continue to submit those as you have those concerns. I want to express my appreciation for my faculty and staff for the spring term. I, like a lot of people, was pretty exhausted by the time we got to the end of spring term. And I know a lot of our faculty had a sense of relief that they were done with the term and the quick change over to distance education.

Just appreciate that many of those folks kind of took a day or two off, and then got ready to roll their sleeves up again and said what do we need to do to make sure we will be well-prepared for the fall in terms of laboratories, instruction, and things like that? We have great people across the WSU system that are all thinking creatively about how to have that great student experience this fall at Pullman, Vancouver, tri-cities, Everett, global campus, Spokane, and other locations where we do instruction and research. We have great people, and I appreciate all that they do and will continue to do. I want to pledge, we're going to continue to keep people as informed as we possibly can. And I know the sense of frustration about wanting to know more quicker. We're going to do the best we can to make sure you have information in a timely fashion, and we will continue to do that.

Watch this next week for campus letters that will talk about and provide additional context or repetition to some of the things we talked about today. And continue to ask those questions and go cougs.
PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you, Kirk. And I will echo that it is really helpful for people to submit questions in advance, because for me at least, it gives me an idea as we see multiple questions on a topic, you know, it becomes really clear that that's an area that we need to focus on when we have our panelist speaking. So please do continue to submit those in advance. And as a reminder, our next COVID-19 town hall will be our sixth in the series. It's scheduled for Friday, June 12. We're doing these every other Friday. So in addition to that, there are a variety of other town halls of one sort or another that are taking place. For parents, we have another town hall for parents that I believe is on June 4, if I remember the date correctly. So we are continuing to use Zoom as a way of trying to communicate directly with folks and answer questions that come up. We had over 2,000 people joining us today, which was great, including at least one visitor from Thailand. So welcome to our Thai viewer. I would encourage you to continue to attend these when you can. If you have questions between now and our next COVID-19 town hall, don't forget that we do have our COVID-19 update website that is updated regularly throughout the week. Please do take a look at that.

With that, thank you to our panelists. Thank you to our subject matter experts, and go Cougs!