

MEMO

To: Deans/Vice Deans/Associate Deans

From: Eric Solberg 
Sr. Vice President, Academic & Research Affairs

Date: November 19, 2021

Re: Status of the Visiting Scholars Program at UTHealth
(Visiting Students, Professional Trainees, Observers, Visiting Scientists)

As you all know, during the earlier peaks of COVID-19 UTHealth suspended its visitors program – now called the Visiting Scholars Program. Due to agreements with other institutions of higher education, we safely re-opened only the Visiting Student category in December 2020 for the start of the 2021 spring semester. So far, in 2021, UTHealth has hosted more than 200 Visiting Students.

Many schools, departments and faculty have been reaching out to ask for an update on other visitor categories, and this memo will share the most recent updates.

In FY21, UTHealth's Auditing & Advisory Services conducted an audit on the Visiting Scholars Program. Several recommendations were made in order for the program to comply with UTHealth and UT System policies and procedures. These include better procedures for applicant tracking, improved onboarding and off-boarding, basic compliance training related to HIPAA and Title IX, and updating the guidelines, policies and procedures for the Visiting Scholars Program.

My office has worked with Human Resources, UT Health Services, Legal Affairs, Institutional Compliance and a newly formed Visiting Scholars Program Oversight Committee to address the recommendations and develop appropriate guidelines, policies and procedures in order to reopen the full program. We have also asked for the University Executive Council to review and approve all of this in moving forward.

We are also exploring our academic agreements with other institutions of higher education to make sure that these will meet our new standards.

In addition, we have been working with UTHealth's central academic IT office to develop an online application and related database for better applicant/visiting scholars tracking.

One final update includes the development of UTHealth's COVID-19 Vaccine & Workplace Safety Protocol Policy (<https://inside.uth.edu/covid-19/policy>), consistent with the emergency regulation issued by CMS and federal law obligations set forth in Executive Order 14042. This policy was announced earlier this week, and it will include all visiting scholars' categories to comply with the policy as part of the Visiting Scholars Program.

As stated above, only the Visiting Student category is currently open for accepting applications at this time. The updated guidelines for the Visiting Scholars Program: <https://www.uth.edu/evpara/otvs/index.htm>.

At this time, our target to begin accepting applications for all categories included in the Visiting Scholars Program is early in 2022. We are also targeting this timeframe for the online application to go live, and we will provide an update prior to going live.

Thank you for your patience as we have worked through all of this in a very interesting time.