

School Spotlight



The University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School



When the Covid-19 pandemic shut down the University of Texas at Austin campus in March 2020, Dell Medical School's KNN team looked for new ways to foster a sense of community and promote human flourishing amidst the transition to online learning and working. In May, Dell launched the *Arts and Humanities: Creating Well Being* seminar series. The weekly discussions, held over Zoom, serve as an online "salon" for the discussion and celebration of creativity. The series is hosted by [Carrie Barron, MD](#), director of the medical school's Creativity for Resilience program. Each week's discussion is led by a different UT-Austin faculty member, drawing on a wide range of university schools and departments. In addition to Dell Medical School faculty, presenters have included faculty from the [Department of English](#), the [Butler School of Music](#), the [Humanities Institute](#), and the [Blanton Museum of Art](#).

During a time when so many people suffer from "Zoom fatigue" after attending too many videoconferences, it has been heartening to see a core group of participants attending the series week after week and engaging in meaningful, emotional, and at times personal conversations. The sessions are highly interactive, with participants discussing how awe, aesthetics, transcendence, and distraction can lighten loads, lift hearts and enhance learning. Topics covered in the sessions include Shakespeare, visual art, film, music, photography, narrative medicine, nature walks, and indigenous art. Each week, faculty, staff and students from across UT-Austin participate. Over 120 unique participants have participated in the programming to date and many have attended multiple sessions.

The series has been so warmly received that it will continue into the fall of 2020 and beyond. Upcoming sessions will be every other week and will feature poetry, woodworking, and much more! The KNN team at Dell will survey participants beginning in September of 2020 to measure program impact and gather feedback and suggestions for the future.

All sessions are recorded so that they can be made available to participants with scheduling conflicts. We always welcome participation from our Kern NNN partner institutions; please contact Briana Huntsberger at Briana.Huntsberger@austin.utexas.edu if you would like to be added the series' email announcement list.