

Greetings MCLA Community:

I write today to share with you the results of the work of our Return to Campus Advisory Committee, and current plans regarding a fall semester return. This plan is predicated on state guidelines, new directives from the governor's office, and new information about the spread of COVID-19 here in the Berkshires and in the New England region. While COVID-19 cases continue to decline here in the Berkshires and in the Commonwealth, we know that this situation could change at any time.

We intend to welcome students and faculty back to campus and resume classes in person on September 2nd.

Although returning to campus this fall presents some risk, we will work to make the campus experience as safe as possible for everyone; of course, this means we will have to significantly shift our way of learning, teaching, and working. We are prepared to change this plan if confronted with new information or recommendations from the state.

This announcement provides a summary of our plans, including the academic year calendar, academic course delivery, and multiple facets of student life.

As a community, we have a shared responsibility to keep one another safe. MCLA will require all community members to wear face coverings on campus, respect social distancing guidelines, adhere to CDC recommendations around hygiene, and stay home if they are not feeling well. We know that some of you have underlying health issues; that necessitates an even greater responsibility to our community and from our leadership to mitigate exposure to COVID-19. I am confident that together, we will do everything possible to keep our community as safe as possible.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR AND COURSE DELIVERY:

The Academic Affairs Subcommittee has arrived at a recommended model that has the features of a slightly altered calendar, blended learning course design, and staggered attendance in the classroom. This proposed model combines our signature small liberal arts face-to-face practices with an accessible technological environment.

- Students will move in to campus residence areas at the originally planned dates prior to the first day of classes on Wednesday, September 2.
- Courses will be delivered using a blended learning model. We anticipate that students will be broken into two or three groups per course. Each group will attend class one day a week, allowing for social distancing in the classroom. When students are not in class, they may participate synchronously or asynchronously, according to the instructor's desired course design.
- At the time of Thanksgiving break, all courses will convert to online delivery. Students will leave at the break, and will not return to campus for the duration of the semester. The academic calendar will not change—finals will occur at the regularly scheduled time. The deadline for grades to be submitted remains December 19.

STUDENT LIFE AND LIVING ON CAMPUS:

Consistent with the aims of our residential liberal arts education, the Student Life Subcommittee presented the following plan:

- Resident students will move in prior to the first day of classes by appointment, with staggered check-in schedules to allow for social distancing. Details on this process will be available on July 1.
- Students will be housed one to a room, regardless of which area they live in. MCLA Residential Programs and Services will also retain 18 beds in six townhouses for isolation/quarantine space. RPS is communicating with students regarding the fall assignment process.
- All students will pay the same price for housing, regardless of which area they live in. This room cost will include free laundry.
- Fall semester housing will end at Thanksgiving for all students. They will be expected to move out and remain home until the Spring 2021 semester begins so that the College can clean and disinfect rooms.
- MCLA Dining Services is developing a plan to serve students in the Centennial Room and other locations to ensure proper social distancing. Increased access to take out/meals to go will be available.
- Students will be expected to wear a face covering whenever they are outside of their own room as part of the College's expectation that each community member do their part to keep all campus community members safe.
- All students will receive a welcome kit with several masks, hand sanitizer, a thermometer, tissues, a touchless door opener, and educational materials.
- Decisions regarding athletic programs are pending further guidance from MASCAC (Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference).

FACULTY AND STAFF RETURN:

Return to campus plans have been worked out on the staff departmental level, and each employee will receive a "welcome back" kit with a mask, cleaning supplies for their work space, and a touchless door opener.

MCLA will begin to re-populate campus offices on July 1. This will be a phased process bringing 25% of office staff back to start, with this calculation based on building capacity. Executive staff members will continue to work with department heads to determine how staff will return and work over the summer. A safe return guide is being developed and will be available at the end of the month for all employees.

Details on an exemption policy regarding individual return to campus plans for all employees will be released next week. Please contact Human Resources staff with questions.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Through this plan, the College's focus and intent is to provide an environment for a return to campus that is as safe as possible. However, College leaders acknowledge that this plan, and returning to campus, still presents some degree of risk.

MCLA is making every effort to follow the recommendations and guidance of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Health, as well as the guidance provided in [Massachusetts' Reopening Higher Education Guidelines](#). We have taken steps to limit the spread of COVID-19, but the health and safety of the community depend upon all its members accepting the shared risk associated with the disease.

We continue to purchase adequate supplies to ensure availability for everyone's use. All campus community members will be required to wear a face covering and follow safe social distance guidelines. Work will continue through the summer months on detailed cleaning plans and procedures for all areas of campus.

WE ARE TRAILBLAZERS AND WE KEEP GOING:

Over the coming weeks, there will be further details communicated to students, faculty, and staff from various departments at the college. Please check your MCLA email account frequently for further details. New information, as well as an archive of all related communications, will continue to be available at our COVID-19 Return to Campus web page: mcla.edu/COVID-19.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS:

- Students and parents should call MCLA's COVID hotline at (413) 662-5550.
- College employees with questions about specific elements of this plan, the process, or any questions around logistics for their department or work space should reach out to their division head.

In closing, I thank you all for the extraordinary accomplishments you have made this semester during an unprecedented remote learning environment. I am grateful for those who participated in our inclusive and consultative process to re-envision the fall 2020 semester. While we cannot expect our plan to be perfect or completely free of risk, I am confident that we are establishing an environment for our campus community that is as safe as possible and that results in a successful return.

Our work will continue over the summer. Let's take care of and be patient with one another during these challenging times.

I look forward to our return to campus.

Jaimie

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“National Top Ten

Public Liberal Arts College”

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