

June 23, 2020

Subj: Reopening the University – Message 4

Dear Faculty and Staff Colleagues:

Since our last [update](#) regarding the University’s academic reopening plans, we have continued to meet, speak, and exchange emails with faculty and staff members, as well as others, in an effort to share information and solicit input on plans for the fall. Thank you for your feedback. It has been helpful, and we will continue to seek it. Though many people remain understandably concerned about the details of the various health, safety, and teaching protocols we are developing, we are cautiously optimistic that we will successfully address these concerns in the coming weeks.

High on the list of all our concerns is the need to firmly establish, and then model and promote the social norms and behaviors essential to maintaining a healthy and safe campus community even before the students arrive. Toward this end, we are implementing a multi-faceted communication campaign for the campus. In mid-July, we will be rolling out a campus wide communications campaign and “return to campus” training program to orient students, faculty, and staff members to the many new health and safety protocols we have put in place.

What follows is an update on some of the other ongoing projects and priorities that we are working to address. Most of this letter is specifically related to campus preparations for reopening. We start, however, with an important update on the recent proclamation on foreign nationals.

Presidential Proclamation on Foreign Nationals

As you may have seen or read, a [Presidential Proclamation](#) was issued late yesterday that suspends foreign nationals seeking to enter in specific nonimmigrant visa status until Dec. 31, 2020. The policy, which takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on June 24, does not currently impact students in F-1 or J-1 status; it does not currently include J-1 Exchange Visitors in Research Scholar, Short-term Scholar, or Professor categories. Additional details and information regarding the proclamation is posted on the Notre Dame International website in the [frequently asked questions section](#).

Health and Safety Protocols

Some confusion has arisen regarding when health and safety protocols will take effect. Mask-wearing, physical distancing, and hand hygiene protocols are in effect **now** – if you are on campus, we expect that you will [follow these guidelines](#). We are working on the daily health check application and testing plans – both of which are making great progress. We are in the process of forming the contact tracing team. We will provide additional information soon.

Research Travel and Academic Visitor Policies

For the past week, the [Academic Reopening Subcommittee](#) has been working to develop a set of policies that balance our research and educational mission with the need to reduce or prevent the spread of the coronavirus within our campus and South Bend communities. These policies must also consider the practicalities we face as a university with faculty members and professional students who commute from as far away as Chicago, Indianapolis, and Washington, D.C. We believe that we are close to reaching a solution on these issues. In the meantime, we encourage you to provide any input you may have to your department chair, unit leader, or members of the subcommittee.

Working Group on Schools and Childcare

An 11-member [Working Group on Schools and Childcare](#), including faculty and staff members, has been formed and this group is closely monitoring decision-making regarding Michiana public schools and childcare facilities and the potential impact on the families of Notre Dame faculty, graduate students, and staff. They will be making recommendations needed to address childcare needs. If you have questions or comments about the working group's activities, please contact Maura Ryan or Bob McQuade, who co-chair the working group.

Classroom Assignments

During the past three weeks, the University Registrar's team has worked to rebuild the fall course schedule to conform to the revised academic calendar. More recently, they began building the fall classroom schedule, based on a detailed analysis of available classroom space with new seating plans to accommodate physical distance requirements that we vetted with local health authorities and other medical experts advising us. In this new arrangement, many of you will be teaching in different classrooms than you have in the past, and some classes will be shifted to a different class period as we work to maximize time available in the teaching day. The Registrar's Office staff is working with the deans' representatives from the colleges and schools this week to finalize the schedule and expects the new course schedules and classroom assignments to be available online in the first few days of July.

Faculty members who have a significant conflict with their class assignments should speak with the dean's representative for scheduling matters, typically an associate dean, to develop an alternative arrangement. Throughout the rest of June and July, the Facilities Design and Operations team will be converting classrooms to accommodate physical distancing and seating arrangements. As the new modified classrooms become available, we will encourage you to visit them and provide feedback. Those faculty members and deans who have visited several demonstration classrooms were pleased at both their safety and conduciveness to effective teaching and learning.

Departmental Exams Time Shift

The Registrar's Office and the Advisory Committee on the Academic Code and Policies recently asked the deans to allow them to repurpose the time and space normally used for departmental exams on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 a.m., and Wednesdays at 8 p.m. They wanted to use this time and these spaces to accommodate physical distancing requirements for fall classes. The deans approved this request.

Fall Teaching

Students come to Notre Dame to have the opportunity to learn from and interact with our wonderful faculty, which is why we have placed such an emphasis on face-to-face instruction during the fall semester. Due to the need for accommodations related to COVID-19, some of you will be teaching in a fully online format. Others have indicated a preference for a fully face-to-face format. We have received a number of inquiries regarding the space that lies between the two. Faculty are asking for guidance on whether and to what extent they can incorporate hybrid approaches in courses.

We have long relied on the creativity of our faculty to conceive positive learning environments, and long deferred to faculty to design courses as they see fit subject to departmental and school needs and norms. Thus, questions about hybrid approaches should be resolved at the local (department, school, college) level. The provost's office does not plan on issuing "rules" on hybrid approaches. We simply ask that you remember the importance students place on interacting with faculty and that you leverage technology in ways that give you better opportunity to connect with our students.

In addition, we need to be prepared to offer quality remote instruction for students in isolation/ quarantine or for all students should we experience another major disruption. What does this mean for faculty members? It means we are asking you to consider designing your courses in ways that anticipate the possibility of a digital pivot. Doing so will serve two purposes. It will ensure those teaching remotely in the fall are well prepared to offer high quality instruction, and it will ensure others are prepared to do the same, if we are forced to again return to remote instruction. ND Learning offers a regular series of [training workshops](#) to assist you. They also are developing a fall 2020 "teaching playbook" and an online mini-course on designing resilient courses. For more information, please contact Associate Provost and Chief Academic Digital Officer Elliott Visconsi.

Library Reopening

In her [June 15 letter to campus](#), University Librarian Diane Walker provided an update on current library services, procedures to expand in-person services, and a look ahead in preparation for August 10. The Hesburgh Libraries Phased Reopening Task Force is overseeing this work in collaboration with several University partners. The task force is publishing frequent updates on the [Library Service Continuity](#) webpage.

COVID-19 Website

The University's [Return to Campus](#) website is updated regularly. We encourage you to visit it often and refer to it for the latest information.

Even as we work urgently, optimistically, and diligently toward the planned August 10 start of the fall semester, we remain mindful of the many unknowns that lie ahead. Everything about COVID-19 – our understanding of the virus itself and responses to it – continues to evolve rapidly, requiring constant attention, patience, and flexibility. We will continue to seek your input on the many issues and challenges we face this fall and to share information as it becomes available. We have many challenges ahead, but they are all made easier knowing that we have such dedicated people helping us prepare.

Yours in Notre Dame,

Tom Burish
Provost

Shannon Cullinan
Executive Vice President

Marie Lynn Miranda
Provost-Elect