

July 22, 2020

Subj: Reopening the University – Message 9

Dear Faculty and Staff Colleagues,

This is another busy week, as we begin the return-to-campus orientation program for students, faculty, and staff members later today; “soft launch” of the daily health check system with a few pilot groups; and continue preparing for the start of the fall semester.

We are thankful to our colleagues in Student Affairs, Campus Safety and University Operations, the OIT-ND Studios team, Facilities Design and Operations, Campus Dining, and many other offices across the University who continue to make steady progress. This message will detail some of their many efforts to welcome students back to campus and ensure their and our health and safety during the fall semester. And today, we are back to one of our longer emails.

Expanded Faculty Advisory Council

In response to requests from faculty, Fr. John decided to expand the membership of the faculty advisory committee, which has been providing input on plans to reopen the University since May. The expanded committee will include six members elected by the faculty from across the University, and will continue to advise Fr. John as the academic year gets underway. For more information, please contact Maura Ryan, vice president and associate provost for faculty affairs.

Masks

We realize that people have been waiting patiently for a final decision on face masks. You may recall that we asked Mark McCready and David Leighton in Notre Dame’s Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering to evaluate the effectiveness of several different types of face coverings. We present here some results from their work, but bottom line: **All faculty, staff, and students in a University campus space will be expected to wear cloth or commercial grade face masks at all times when they are, or may be, in the presence of other individuals, except when alone in a private room (e.g., office, assigned residence hall room) or in a private vehicle. When outdoors, masks are expected to be worn whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained.**

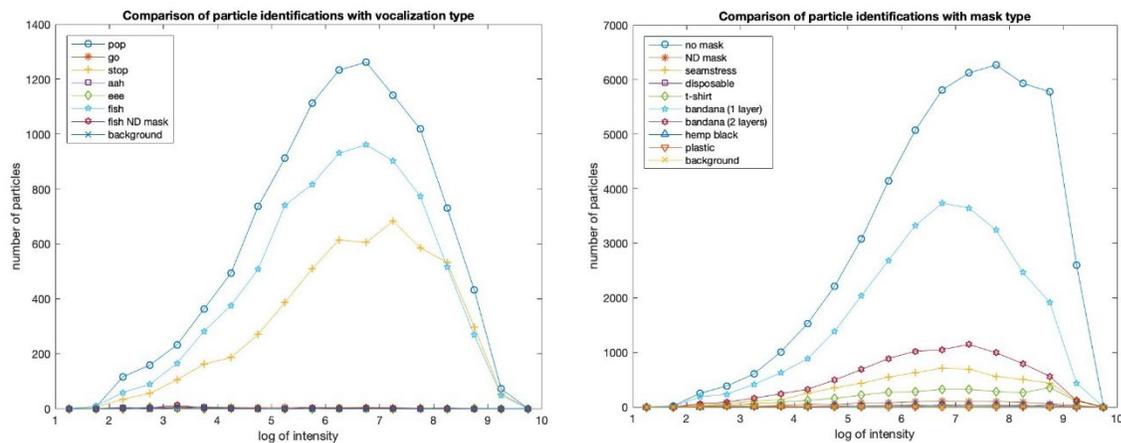
Here is a summary of Professors McCready and Leighton’s findings:

- When worn correctly, cloth face coverings of the design the University is providing to students, faculty, and staff members substantially reduce the potential viral load in a room, and thus likely mitigate the potential for SARS-CoV-2 transmission in a classroom environment. This is consistent with a [recent CDC report](#) regarding two symptomatic hair stylists who were later confirmed with COVID-19. The salon required both stylists and clients to wear face masks. Among the 139 clients exposed to the two COVID-19 positive and symptomatic stylists, no evidence of transmission was found. Thus, at Notre Dame, we are requiring faculty members to wear face masks while teaching.

- Face shields provide little benefit to a faculty member and minimal protection to the students in the classroom. This is consistent with observations in the last week, where a Swiss hotel found a [dramatic difference in infection rates](#) between employees wearing masks and those wearing face shields. Thus, at Notre Dame, face shields may not be used as a substitute for face masks.
- We are sensitive to the needs of faculty and students in language instruction classes and when individuals with hearing impairments are present. We asked Professors McCready and Leighton to test the effectiveness of clear face masks (see company photo at right). While these masks can be effective, they were much more difficult to fit properly; without a proper fit, they were not effective at blocking particles. We will be purchasing and distributing clear face masks for language instruction classes and other special circumstances and will provide instruction on how to ensure they are fitted correctly.



For those of you who want to see a little more of the good work done by our faculty colleagues, below are two graphics from their analyses:



At left is a graph of the number of detectable particles for different vocalizations – sounds like pop, go, stop, aah, eee, and fish. In this graphic, you can observe that while the sound “fish” produces a large number of identifiable particles, when a Notre Dame-provided mask is worn, the number of particles drops dramatically. At right, different masks are compared, with the Notre Dame mask performing especially well.

Personal Travel during the Fall Semester

During the fall semester, we are asking students, faculty, and staff members to limit any personal travel outside the local area, as a way to reduce the likelihood of importing more virus into our community. At the same time, we are not interested in “policing” this behavior in any way. We ask all of you to use your good judgment regarding personal travel. If you must travel, we urge you to take advantage of the resources provided by the University Wellness Center regarding advice on health and safety practices before, during, and after your planned trip – for your own health as well as our University community.

Long Distance Commuters

For those faculty members who commute from Chicago, Indianapolis, or other areas outside the South Bend region, we ask you to remain mindful of and follow the campus health and safety protocols, including daily health checks both while you are on campus and while you are away from campus. Doing so is part of our shared commitment to the health and safety of each other and our campus community.

Sample Syllabus Language

As promised, colleagues in the Provost's Office, Academic Advising, and Student Affairs developed sample language for faculty to include in their syllabi. This language has been reviewed and approved by the Academic Reopening Committee. We encourage you to include this language or something similar in course syllabi.

Health and Safety Protocols

In this class, as elsewhere on campus, students must comply with all University health and safety protocols, including:

- Face masks that completely cover the nose and mouth will be worn by all students and instructors;
- Physical distancing will be maintained in all instructional spaces;
- Students will sit in assigned seats throughout the semester, which will be documented by faculty for purposes of any needed contact tracing; and
- Protocols for staged entry to and exit from classrooms and instructional spaces will be followed.

We are part of a community of learning in which compassionate care for one another is part of our spiritual and social charter. Consequently, compliance with these protocols is an expectation for everyone enrolled in this course. If a student refuses to comply with the University's health and safety protocols, the student must leave the classroom and will earn an unexcused absence for the class period and any associated assignments/assessments for the day. Persistent deviation from expected health and safety guidelines may be considered a violation of the University's "[Standards of Conduct](#)," as articulated in [du Lac: A Guide for Student Life](#), and will be referred accordingly.

Health Checks and Attendance

Every morning, members of the Notre Dame Community will be asked to complete a daily health check and submit their information via the *Return to Campus Advisor* application. The health check application will indicate one of the following:

- a) Student is cleared for class and should attend class in person; or
- b) Student is advised to stay home to monitor symptoms and should participate in class virtually and complete all assignments and assessments; or
- c) Student must consult a healthcare provider and should contact University Health Services (UHS) for an assessment. In the meantime, the student should participate in class virtually and complete all assignments and assessments. Depending on the medical assessment, UHS will follow the University's standard protocol for obtaining an excused absence for medical reasons.

Notre Dame International Update

Notre Dame International continues to work closely with colleges, schools, and international students to address the many unusual circumstances we are facing this fall. On this front, there are a number of positive developments. First, all returning Chinese students will be able to "study away locally," at partner institutions until they are able to join us, which we hope will be in time for the spring semester. For the most part, returning students from India will be able to return to campus on available flights. Students on F-1 and J-1 visas from Schengen Area, UK, and Ireland are able to enter the U.S., as the State Department continues to process their visas. NDI has notified all eligible students (continuing and incoming) of this change.

COVID-19 Response Unit (or CRU)

Last week, Vice President for Campus Safety and University Operations Mike Seamon provided

Academic Reopening Committee members with an overview of the COVID-19 Response Unit (CRU), which will be activated Monday, July 27. The unit comprises a combination of medical, safety, and administrative professionals who will perform and manage the following functions:

- Managing the system that monitors daily health checks
- Administering on-campus coronavirus tests
- Managing the 24/7 COVID-19 telephone hotline
- Contact tracing for the campus community
- Overseeing support for students in isolation and quarantine

The on-campus testing center, located at the southwest corner of Notre Dame Stadium at the Lou Holtz gate, will offer COVID-19, seasonal flu, and strep tests. For COVID-19, there is a rapid antigen test that delivers results within 15 minutes at the testing center itself. This test has high sensitivity, so a positive result can be acted on immediately. If the antigen test is negative, a nasal swab sample will be sent for analysis by PCR to confirm the individual's COVID-19 status.

Today, July 22, CRU will soft launch its daily health check system among selected groups on campus, including staff from the offices of the provost and the executive vice president, as well as a number of faculty and associated research group members for research laboratories that have reopened. Starting on Monday, July 27, all faculty, staff, and students will be expected to complete their daily health checks every day, regardless of whether they are coming to campus. This supports public health efforts to track the development of symptoms and also allows us to assess how well we are complying with this important component of our health and safety protocols. The CRU will share additional details about its personnel, processes, and functions in a Thursday announcement to the entire Notre Dame community.

Preparing Classrooms

We continue to prepare our classrooms for the fall semester by implementing physical distancing, health and safety protocols, and enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices. The combination of these three efforts will help reduce the potential spread of COVID-19. Some additional details:

Physical Distancing. We are implementing physical distancing in all Registrar and departmental classrooms as well as 27 additional spaces that will be utilized as classrooms this fall (e.g., DPAC, Morris Inn, Washington Hall). Faculty will be at least 6' from students in classrooms. Approximately 70% of the classrooms will allow for 6' of physical distancing between students. In some classrooms, mostly those with fixed furniture, we were not always able to allow for a full 6' between students. However, with faculty and students all wearing masks while in the classroom, these distances were deemed safe for students and faculty by both local and national medical experts.

In auditoriums, we were advised to align students in "columns" rather than in a staggered format so that students would be facing the back of the head of the student in front of them, rather than being at an angle, to lessen the potential to inhale droplets. We note that Facilities Design and Operations test ran "columns" versus staggered seating in auditoriums. Staggered seating in auditoriums did not change capacities, which further supported our decision to use column arrangements.

We have worked closely with the local health department authorities, who helped us develop these physical distancing guidelines for our classrooms. They have personally visited, reviewed, and approved our implementation in multiple classroom settings. In addition, the CEO/president and the chief analytics officer from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, which received national attention for its effective management of COVID-19, have reviewed and endorsed the physical distancing implementation in our classrooms.

These efforts have reduced the average capacity across all Registrar classrooms by 54%. We should all notice a discernible decrease in student numbers and congestion at any given time. For example, in DeBartolo Hall, the number of students in the building in fall 2020 compared to fall 2019 decreases by anywhere from 40% to 62% depending on day and time slot, with an average decrease of 51%. Consequently, our buildings will not “feel” as crowded as they have been in previous years.

Health and Safety Protocols. Our campus wide health and safety protocols certainly extend to classrooms. We encourage faculty to include expectations regarding health and safety protocols in their syllabi and to discuss these protocols explicitly with students.

- All students and faculty will wear masks at all times in the classroom and in buildings that contain classrooms.
- Faculty members will ensure that each student sits in an assigned seat to help with contact tracing should that become necessary.
- We ask that students be instructed to fill in seats from the back row to the front, in order to increase the distance between the instructor and students in classrooms that are not filled to maximum capacity, and from the middle of a row to the outside of the row to minimize congestion.
- At the end of each class, we ask, wherever possible, that instructors dismiss students by row at the end of each class (using alternating doors, if available), starting with the row closest to the door(s), in order to reduce congestion at the doors and in the hallway.
- Finally, we ask that instructors remind students to move through the hallways and go directly to either their next class or out of the building using the nearest exit and to not congregate in the halls.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfecting. Classrooms will be deep cleaned and sanitized by Building Services each night. In addition, classrooms will be disinfected, at a minimum, an additional two times each day by Building Services. Disinfecting spray for surfaces and hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom for use by faculty and students. We recommend that faculty disinfect the lectern and their working space(s) at the beginning and end of each class.

HVAC. Prior to occupancy, each building that was hibernated had the air systems operated continuously for at least 48 hours. Additionally, air filters were inspected and fit tested throughout all campus buildings, nearly all of which are equipped with MERV-13 or MERV-14 final filters. These filters are capable of trapping contaminants in the 0.3 - 1.0 μm (micron) range, including all bacteria, droplet nuclei, and most smoke. Additionally, air systems will have a daily pre- and post-occupancy cycle. Lastly, these systems maximize fresh air within the design limits of the equipment and outdoor conditions.

Student Return

We know that many of you have expressed concerns about the return of students and their behaviors on and off campus after they arrive and during the semester. What follows is an overview of the steps Erin Hoffmann Harding and the team in Student Affairs are taking to bring students safely back to campus and support them during the fall semester.

- As part of the University’s health and safety guidelines for returning to campus, all undergraduate and graduate students are required to undergo [pre-matriculation testing](#). We will ask any student who tests positive not to return to campus until medically cleared to do so.

- All new and returning students will be required to complete pre-matriculation modules offering information, education, and bystander intervention skills that will reinforce campus health and safety practices. Students must complete these modules by July 31.
- Assistant rectors and resident assistants will move into halls beginning July 26.
- Hundreds of student leaders will arrive August 1-2 and will participate in an in-depth training designed to share information about COVID-19 transmission and risks, reinforce campus health and safety practices, help establish new campus norms, and serve as a resource for peers. About 1,300 students will receive this training before classes begin, augmenting the return-to-campus orientation required of all students, faculty, and staff members.
- New first-year students and transfer students will move in on either August 3 or August 5.
- Students and their families can expect the same [Welcome Week](#) experience regardless of their move-in date.
- The welcome program for new graduate students will be Monday, August 3 and Tuesday, August 4.
- During move-in, students may bring no more than two guests to assist with move-in, and everyone must wear masks, and comply with other campus health and safety protocols. Further details about move-in are [available](#) from the Office of Residential Life.

Residential Life

- This fall Notre Dame will operate 33 on-campus residence halls for undergraduate students, including the new, soon-to-open Johnson Family Hall. To accommodate students not taking part in study abroad programs this fall, Pangborn Hall will house women this year, and several undergraduate students (men and women) will live in Fischer Graduate Residences.
- We reserved three off-campus housing facilities for students living on campus who require isolation or quarantine, in addition to separate buildings of Fischer Graduate Residences.
- Off-campus students will most likely isolate or quarantine in their apartments or homes.
- Regardless of location, all students in quarantine and isolation will be monitored daily, provided with supplies, and supported by offices including University Health Services, the COVID-19 Response Unit, and the Center for Student Support and Care.
- Per Erin Hoffmann Harding's [June 22 letter](#), students were able to choose to move off campus this fall without incurring a housing contract penalty and still earn credit toward the University's six-semester residency requirement. We offered space to all students who applied to live on campus this fall.
- Details about hall life can be found and will be updated regularly in the [Residence Hall operations](#) section of the University's website

Faith Life

- The [Basilica of the Sacred Heart](#) is already open for public Masses and operating consistent with [diocesan guidelines](#).
- Most daily Masses will take place in residence halls and academic buildings, though adjusted as needed for physical distancing requirements.
- Sunday Masses in residence halls will conform to required guidelines, resulting in either multiple Masses in the hall chapel or a consistent alternative location and time each week.

Student Health and Well-Being

- In addition to its regular primary care and sports medicine services, University Health Services is working in close collaboration with the COVID-19 Response Unit (CRU) on student pre-matriculation testing, the on-site testing clinic, students' daily health check, distribution of the flu vaccine (which is required this year for all students), contact tracing, and student quarantine and isolation care.

- The University Counseling Center, the McDonald Center for Student Well-Being, and the Center for Student Support and Care have spent the summer reviewing students' learning accommodation requests and assessing student perceptions and care needs related to COVID-19, mental health, racism, and discrimination in order to offer the most helpful programs and services this fall. Leaders in these units are working closely with the [Emotional Support and Well-being Working Group](#).
- These departments also plan to expand telehealth and teletherapy offerings to students as the fall semester begins.

Student Facilities and Extra-Curricular Programs

- All facilities designed for student programs and activities will be open this fall, with enhanced sanitization and disinfection protocols, and modified capacity to comply with University physical distancing requirements. We will adjust some facility operating hours to allow for deeper daily cleaning or to accommodate academic classes.
- Reflecting scientific evidence about transmission, students will be heavily encouraged to use outdoor spaces for activities and socializing. We have installed tents on North and South quads that students can reserve for informal gatherings.
- While all student clubs and organizations have the opportunity to meet in person, they must adhere to the health and safety protocols and a set of amended student club and organization guidelines we will publish before classes begin. Student clubs must also adhere to fall travel and visitor policies.

Career and Professional Development

Given the uncertain economic environment, the Meruelo Center for Career and Professional Development developed a set of resources for students searching for [full-time employment](#) or seeking opportunities during this most unusual [summer](#).

- All [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) career specialists are available, offering in-person or virtual appointments this fall.
- Notre Dame continues to deepen its engagement with employers, building on relationships through the Notre Dame family (whether alumni, parents, faculty, or friends). Regional and industry experts in California, Texas, and Washington, D.C. are available to students either on campus or virtually to strategically optimize employment opportunities

Resilient Teaching

With so much uncertainty about the course of the virus in the days ahead, we feel it is critical that we try to ensure courses be flexible in the event of potential disruption and effective for on-campus and remote students. We encourage you to participate in ND Learning's many support programs and refer to its sources of guidance, including a resilient teaching "playbook," guidance and updates on using key technologies (including the dual-mode classroom technology), and a regular series of workshops and orientations. Please consult [Resilient Teaching](#), the hub for updated information about programs, policies, and sources of support for fall teaching readiness.

We close with a wonderful, candid photograph of students from the ACE program. Note they are all wearing masks and sitting at least six feet apart (Marie Lynn measured!). Let's all follow their good example.

Thank you again for your efforts to help safely reopen the University, and remember:

- Wear a mask.
- Practice physical distancing.
- Wash your hands often.
- [And soon] Complete your daily health check.

Yours in Notre Dame,

Marie Lynn Miranda, Provost
Shannon Cullinan, Executive Vice President

