

August 19, 2020

Subj: Temporary Transition to Remote Instruction – Message 2

Dear Colleagues,

Since yesterday, I have met with the deans, department chairs, the Behavior and Cultural Change Working Group, and members of the President's Faculty Advisory Committee. I have also received messages from many faculty members.

In planning the reopening, we expected that some students tested would be positive for the virus after arriving on campus. We expected that some students would make personal decisions that were inconsistent with our health and safety protocols. However, we were surprised and, honestly, disappointed in our inability to deal with the scale and velocity of the challenges we faced with testing and contact tracing just one week into the start of the semester. We have substantially pivoted our processes to better serve the Notre Dame community.

My message to all of you, offered with humility, is one of thanks and appreciation for your efforts. You – our faculty and staff – have been, and no doubt will continue to be, exceptional. You worked through the summer preparing for dual-mode instruction. You structured or restructured your courses to meet the needs of modified classroom spaces. You prepared to make this semester a success – working to make classrooms safe, procuring and installing new equipment and technologies, and developing enhanced cleaning protocols. The list is astonishing. Ironically, we have not traced a single positive case to in-person instruction, the places from which students are now restricted as we double down on testing and contact tracing.

The question before us is whether we can recover from this setback and sufficiently regain our footing to continue with in-person instruction for the fall semester. I really hope so, as I so want our students to have the opportunity to continue to engage with all of you in person. We know you want to be here for our students, and we know that you join us in our efforts to rapidly improve our processes. I welcome your feedback for areas of improvement, as well as suggestions for new approaches we might take.

A few updates:

General

- Nearly all of the students (96.5%) who have tested positive for the virus are undergraduates. We hope to resume in-person instruction for graduate and professional students as soon as Monday morning. More soon.
- Instructors are free to teach from on-campus classrooms or remotely for the next two weeks.
- When teaching alone in classrooms on campus to remote students, instructors are not required to wear a mask, but are asked to wipe down the workstation at the conclusion of the class period.

Student access to facilities

- The stadium testing facility remains open and operational. The new red/yellow/green pass system seems to be working much better.
- Graduate students may access their offices, core research facilities, and the Hesburgh Libraries.
- Undergraduate students living on campus may access the Hesburgh Libraries for class or study.
- Visit Hesburgh Libraries [Service Continuity](#) webpage for modified hours and access.
- Instructors may request an exception to allow off-campus undergraduate students to take part in limited outdoor on-campus class activities, subject to their dean's approval.
- We are exploring ways to allow on- and off-campus undergraduate students to access studios and design facilities, as well as equipment and materials they need to complete their course work remotely. More soon.

Concerns about WiFi/connectivity

- Given campus WiFi bandwidth limitations, please advise students to use Ethernet connections when possible.

Concern for students

- Student Affairs and others are aware of the challenges facing low-resource and international undergraduate students if we are required to send them home as we did in the spring. We are developing plans to support these students.
- We also are aware that if we send students home, doing so will require a plan to ensure we return them safe and healthy.

I very much look forward to the day when we can change the topic of our conversations from dealing with COVID-19 to our aspirations for the University. Let me thank you again for your relentless work to ensure that we are able to deliver a world-class education to our wonderful students.

In the meantime, remember:

- Wear your mask
- Practice physical distancing
- Wash your hands regularly
- Complete your daily health check

And be kind to each other and generous to yourself – and remember that being kind to our community includes holding each other accountable.

Yours in Notre Dame,

Marie Lynn Miranda, Provost