

Hello Trailblazers,

As we settle into the spring semester let me extend my thanks to all of you once again, for transitioning back to campus during an unparalleled pandemic. We have successfully and safely done this together as a team for two semesters now. In the fall we kept our positivity rate ten times lower than that of the state. As we progress through the spring semester we are again on track to remain at a low threshold of COVID cases. This success is a true testament to the teamwork and resilience of the MCLA community.

While we remain vigilant keeping ourselves and one another safe during these challenging times, we also continue to keep a hopeful and ready eye on the future. Planning is earnestly underway for the fall 2021 semester, which we anticipate will bring a full return to the classroom.

As we have done throughout the pandemic, we will continuously monitor the data and make changes accordingly by following State and Federal guidance in accordance with health and safety procedures. Over the past few weeks emerging news about speedier vaccination schedules is promising. With all of these factors in mind, we will have several contingencies in place, but are optimistic about a full return to the classroom this fall; students should expect to be on campus and attend classes in person every day they have scheduled classes.

Final determinations about what fall 2021 will entail are subject to final guidance and approval from the MA Executive Office of Education, MA Department of Higher Education, and the provisions under the most up-to-date MA Higher Education Control Plan. However, the details below provide our latest intentions.

Fall 2021 Course Registration

As you plan for fall and registration, here are some important dates and information to keep in mind:

- **March 15: fall course schedule released***
- March 16: academic advising begins
- April 2 through April 16: online course registration available
- April 19: financial aid packages will be distributed to returning students after course registration and the fall 2021 billing cycle will begin

***Please note, that while we anticipate a full return to the classroom, you will notice that courses are designated as HYBRID on the fall course schedule. This is to allow the necessary flexibility to pivot seamlessly in the event of unexpected developments.**

The strong likelihood, however, is that all hybrid classes will be collapsed to single face-to-face sections, and students will meet on campus all times and days assigned to their courses. For example, a student signing up for a course that meets Mondays at 9 a.m. and has online components Wednesdays and Fridays at 9 a.m. should plan to be in the classroom Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 9 a.m.

Thank you for your patience as we maintain flexibility while still planning for a full return to campus.

COVID-19 Protocols

As we work toward a full return to the classroom this fall, we continue to be vigilant by doing everything in our control to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 for fall 2021:

- COVID-19 Testing: Our robust testing model will remain in effect and we anticipate continued surveillance testing across all campus populations.
- All of us should anticipate continuation with social distancing and mask wearing protocols, including de-densifying of indoor spaces and gatherings.
- I ask that you please revisit the [Trailblazer Agreement](#) to refresh yourselves on the commitment we have all made to keep one another safe.

Campus Life

At a residential liberal arts campus like MCLA, a highlight is the interaction we have with one another in spaces where we live and learn.

- Residence Halls: We expect to be able to return to fuller capacity, back to offering double rooms occupancy. Information about the housing process for students is forthcoming.
- Gatherings: We anticipate that we will be able to return to some form of in-person, socially distanced events, including lectures, celebrations, meetings, and club and organization events. These will of course follow the latest state guidelines.
- Athletics: We are planning for preseason and full competition schedules for next academic year.

More detailed information for students, faculty, and staff will be forthcoming in regards to housing, financial aid, and academic delivery once we have more finalized information to share. Later this spring I plan to host a series of town halls to discuss these details and emerging questions from the campus community.

You can continue to find additional information and an archive of communications on MCLA's COVID-19 landing page. The MCLA hotline phone number for questions related to COVID-19 is still available at 413-662-5550, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday.

Stay well,

JB

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