

Dear MCLA Community:

As you are well aware, there has been an uptick nationally in COVID-19 over the past few weeks that has been mirrored across the state and in our local community. This surge has impacted us on campus and initiated stay-in-place (lockdown) measures in the Flagg Townhouses over the past two weeks.

After a careful review of the COVID-19 data at hand, I have determined the spread in cases has reached a level that warrants a pivot to remote learning for the College.

- **Beginning Monday, April 5 ALL MCLA courses (including MCLA Pittsfield) will be delivered remotely for the remainder of the Spring 2021 semester.**
- **Residence Halls will officially close at 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 11.**
- **Campus offices will remain fully open and operational at this time to support the transition to remote learning for all of our students.**

Since March 22, we have identified 28 positive student COVID-19 cases through our Broad Institute testing program on campus, resulting in a 3.6% positivity rate for our resident students (2.8% positivity rate overall) over this time. The impact in our residence areas is acute: 6.1% of our resident students are now COVID-19 positive and 18% are in CDC/DPH defined isolation or quarantine protocols.

To be clear, extensive contact tracing has unequivocally proven that classroom instruction is **not** the cause of this cluster. This increase in cases and spread of the virus is directly related to social activity on and off campus. It is evident the Trailblazer Agreement was not observed and investigations are underway to hold all persons in violation responsible.

### **Academic Instruction**

Because transmission is not due to classroom instruction, in-person classes scheduled for this Thursday and Friday will continue to be taught in their regular classrooms. Classes will pivot for ALL students on **Monday, April 5** to a remote/distance learning format and MCLA will deliver all academic courses via remote instruction for the remainder of the Spring 2021 semester.

We will share information about learning resources for students and faculty in a subsequent message. Faculty will continue to have access to classrooms and offices for the duration of the semester.

As planned, summer courses are online. Additional information can be found here:  
<https://www.mcla.edu/academics/summer.php>

### **Residence Hall Closure**

All MCLA residence areas will officially shut down for the semester effective on **Sunday, April 11 at 5 p.m.** Details for making arrangements to move out for the semester will follow in a separate message to resident students.

**If you have gone home for the lockdown period, please know you cannot return to campus to move out your belongings until Monday, April 5.** All protocols for return to campus after lockdown remain in place. You will be able to schedule move-out appointments between April 5 and April 11.

**If you are currently on campus,** you may schedule move out appointments beginning Friday, April 2 through Sunday, April 11.

Students currently in isolation or quarantine may remain on campus until they are cleared for release by DPH/Health Services. Meal delivery and health check-ins will continue.

COVID testing will continue next week so that any student who wants to test before moving out can do so. Testing will be done from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday next week.

We will implement procedures for a small number of students to remain living on campus as their situations require. Please contact Cathy Holbrook, Vice President of Student Affairs, if you have an extenuating circumstances.

Room and board refunds will be issued to students in the coming weeks, using a prorated formula. More information will be available in the coming days.

### **Campus Offices**

At this time, all campus offices will remain open and will be staffed in-person. APA, AFSCME, and NUP staff should contact their supervisors with any questions.

### **COVID-19 Testing**

Our campus COVID-19 testing site in the Campus Center Gym will remain open for regular testing hours through Friday, April 9. Testing hours are 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Walk-in testing will be accommodated for students looking for a test to return home and for faculty and staff looking to participate in surveillance testing.

### **Detailed communications to students, faculty and staff will follow in the next twenty-four hours:**

- **Students:** Please watch for a communication from Cathy Holbrook, Vice President of Student Affairs.
- **Faculty:** Adrienne Wootters, Vice President of Academic Affairs, will be sending additional detail regarding course delivery.
- **Staff:** Barb Chaput, Executive Director of Human Resources will be providing additional follow-up.

The COVID hotline at 413.662.5550 remains open for your most immediate questions.

Please know, that although this news comes as a disappointment, I am proud of the work that this community has done in order to stay safe during a year filled with unprecedented circumstances. For 13 months we have hunted down and tracked the virus successfully, and kept it at bay for longer than many other institutions. Overwhelmingly, our students and our community at large have complied with a set of health and safety regulations that we never had to anticipate.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue to work together to navigate these most uncertain and challenging times. But most importantly, please continue to observe the safety protocols of wearing a mask, keeping a social distance, washing hands, and monitoring your health. Whether or not you are on campus, these protocols will serve you and your community well.

Peace and health to you,

Jaimie

**James F. Birge, Ph.D.**

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