

## **Update on Campus Operations**

### **5.21.2020**

Hello MCLA Faculty and Staff Community:

The weather is getting warmer, the spring semester is complete, and online summer sessions begin next week. I hope you will all take a moment to pause and recognize the incredible work you have done during this uncertain and unusual time. You all have my gratitude and admiration for having managed the crisis so well.

There is also encouraging news regarding the spread of COVID-19 in Massachusetts. Since mid-April, according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, four major indicators on the spread of the virus in the Commonwealth reflect a downward trend: The seven-day average of positive tests rate has declined 67% to 9.4%; the three-day average of the number of COVID-19 patients in the hospital has declined 30% to 2,508; the number of hospitals using surge capacity has declined 38% to 13; and the three-day average of COVID-19 deaths has declined 44% to 85. These state-wide trends are reflective of Berkshire County data, too, according to Berkshire Health Systems.

These data underpin the work of MCLA's Return to Campus Advisory Committee and subcommittees as they continue to meet and develop recommendations for a return to campus this fall—thanks again to those who are serving in that capacity. Through the work of this committee, MCLA is preparing a strategy to return people to campus as safely as possible. The Governor's phased plan to re-open the Commonwealth, data from public health organizations, our capacity, collective and individual, for exercising protocols for safe interactions, and our partnership with Berkshire Health systems on testing procedures also guide this planning effort.

I am also aware of recent data regarding students' interests in returning to campuses in the fall. In [What Students Want This Fall](#), the authors report on survey data collected from 10,000 high school and college students that reveal 78% of respondents find the experience of in-class learning this fall appealing, while one-third would transfer out of their institution if colleges continued on-line course delivery.

With all of the data, guidance, and information in mind, I write to offer a brief update on a few important topics:

### **Remote Work**

I have determined that it is in the best interest of the MCLA community to extend the remote work status until June 30<sup>th</sup>. Child day care centers and camps will not be fully functional until then and the additional time allows the College to prepare for the start of a new academic year in a COVID-19 era. As before, this date could be extended in the future based upon prevailing health and safety considerations. Please continue to share any specific concerns or needs around remote work with your direct supervisor.

### **Return to Campus Advisory Committee**

Our subcommittees continue to meet and will submit their recommendations to me the week of May 25. The **Academic Affairs Subcommittee** is developing plans for course delivery models, faculty return policies, and potential pivots from our "Plan A" as per best practices from the state regarding planning for a return to campus. The **Staff Subcommittee** is collecting department needs regarding office space,

accommodations for faculty and staff with underlying health concerns, and other needs, and is working closely with the **Operations Subcommittee**, which is determining cleaning procedures, PPE and cleaning supply procurement, and other considerations related to health and safety of our campus infrastructure. Finally, the **Student Affairs Subcommittee** is developing plans to safely and responsibly house our student population, communicating social distancing policies, working with Aramark on dining plans, and otherwise determining what the student experience will look like at MCLA this fall.

In June, I will be communicating the main Committee's final recommendations, as well as our plans for a return to campus.

### **Feedback, Town Halls, and Questions**

On June 1<sup>st</sup> I will host a series of virtual staff, faculty, and student town hall meetings, during which I will offer additional details and answer questions from our community about our return to campus. Please be on the lookout for invitations to those events from Executive Assistant Lisa Lescarbeau in the coming days.

### **FY21 Budget Update**

As you might imagine, the pandemic has caused families to rethink their children's college plans for fall 2020. New student deposits are down measurably compared to last year and, as a result, we are projecting undergraduate enrollment of only 1,010 students in the fall. This level of enrollment places tremendous pressure on the budget. However, we have reduced operating budgets across the institution to levels that help us avoid reductions in the full-time labor force. Reductions in travel, supplies and equipment, vendor contracts, the number of part-time and adjunct positions, and removal of un-filled positions in the budget for next year, as well as sources of additional revenue allow us to preserve currently filled, full-time positions. I do not anticipate the need for furloughs or layoffs at this time.

Our planning efforts remain a work in progress as we respond to rapidly changing information at the local, state, and federal levels. We will continue to communicate changes as they come forward.

I hope that you all are healthy, safe, and ready to enjoy a much-needed long weekend. I will be back in touch soon.

Thank you again for all you continue to do,

Jaimie

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