

Spring Return to Campus

Dear Colleagues,

I want to thank you for such a successful fall semester. All of you came together this fall during a very unimaginable situation by doing your best to implement everything within our control to keep each other safe, and I am proud of this community for staying the course. In true MCLA form and in light of the many obstacles brought on by the Coronavirus Pandemic, racial injustices, and political and social unrest, our community persevered.

Although this week's warmer temperatures have been a welcome surprise, winter is still on the horizon. With the change of seasons in mind, I want to share more details and plans for our spring semester reopening and a few key reminders as resident students return home and we all transition to remote learning.

Spring 2021 Academic Calendar

Classes for the spring semester will begin on Tuesday, January 26. Similar to fall, MCLA's spring 2021 plan features blended learning course design, and staggered attendance in the classroom. Once again, this model combines our signature small liberal arts face-to-face practices with an accessible technological environment. There will be no Spring Break this year but an additional day has been added to the President's Day weekend, and the recess will begin on Friday, February 12. Thank you to the Academic Policies Committee and the All College Committee for their work on finalizing the spring calendar.

Spring 2021 COVID-19 Testing

In order to comply with the updated testing guidance for higher education from the state, MCLA will expand our spring testing program which will be implemented with guidance from our local public health partners. Similar to the fall, we will test all residential students upon move-in and then once-a-week for the next two weeks. After that, we will move to surveillance testing, with fifty percent of resident students tested each week.

We are also expanding commuter student testing, with mandatory testing of all commuter students to begin the semester and then mandatory once-a-month testing. Faculty and staff will again have the option of asymptomatic testing once a month as part of our testing program and will also have the option of additional tests at cost for \$25. The spring plan represents an increase of approximately 3,000 tests over the fall semester.

MASCAC/NCAA Winter Sports

After an in-depth review of the information from the state and NCAA, consultation among the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference (MASCAC) Presidents, athletic directors, and athletic trainers and after exhausting all possibilities, including a review of the risks involved, the eight MASCAC Presidents have made the difficult decision to cancel all winter sports competition. Similar to the fall sports, the state universities are planning to provide winter sport student athletes with on-campus, in-person practices, conditioning and training opportunities throughout their traditional season to support their physical and mental well-being. These

practice and training opportunities will not use a year of NCAA Eligibility and will be done in compliance with the campus, state, federal and NCAA COVID guidance and protocols

New Student Recruitment Update

The Office of Admission continues to welcome prospective students and families both on-campus and in virtual settings for information sessions and tours. In addition to these opportunities, were two Virtual Athletic Preview Days and a Virtual Open House Week, where students and families participated in academic info sessions, student panels, a virtual resource fair and more. To date, the virtual and in person visits/events are even with in person visits/events last year.

While the admission staff continues to recruit students through virtual visits and fairs, file review has begun for both spring and fall. The staff and Enrollment Management team have made adjustments around fall application review including technology/data updates, a test-blind (test-free) policy, an equitable merit-based scholarship process, and building on the athletic recruit funnel.

Student Resources

I wanted to share with you items we communicated to students to better assist them in their transition for the semester. Please feel free to reference and share with students as you continue to work closely with them.

- ***Campus Food Pantry***

As the end of the semester nears, we want to send a reminder about the Campus Food Pantry. The Pantry is accessible 24 hours a day 7 days a week via the link below, with pick-up twice a week (including during the upcoming winter break). The Pantry offers a variety of food items, frozen Aramark meals, as well as toiletries/personal care items. The Pantry also offers \$25-\$50 Walmart Gift Cards (available during the winter break as well) and the link to that application is also below.

To place a food pantry order, click on this form: [Food Pantry Order Form](#)

To request a Walmart Gift Card, click on this link: [Gift Card Application](#)

- ***Resiliency Fund Available on a Limited Basis***

The Resiliency Fund has a limited amount of money available to support unexpected/unusual needs of students as they transition this semester from on-campus living and learning to remote learning and relocate for the intercession between semesters. This fund can be used to address some of the expenses associated with the period between Thanksgiving and the start of the spring semester for those who cannot go home, need transportation assistance to do so, assistance with local storage, technology needs to support remote learning, etc. This money is not intended for ongoing expenses that are factored into financial aid disbursements, such as tuition, fees, room and board or rent for your local apartment, and regular monthly expenses such as car payments, insurance, etc.

The application is open now and available here – [Resiliency Fund Fall 2020](#)

- ***Spring Billing and FAFSA Reminder:***

Bills for the spring 2021 semester will be generated the third week in November with a December 21 due date. Students with questions, should contact the Office of Student Financial Services at 413-662-5230 or email studentaccounts@mcla.edu with any billing or payment questions.

FAFSA is open for the 21-22 academic year! Students can renew online at www.fafsa.gov. The priority deadline for funding is January 1. If a student needs any assistance completing the FAFSA, they should contact the Office of Student Financial Services at 413-662-5219 or email aid@mcla.edu for an appointment. The office is happy to assist all students with getting this important step completed.

End of Semester Town Hall

I hope you will all join me on Thursday, November 19 at noon for a faculty and staff Town Hall to reflect on this semester, share details for the spring, and discuss questions our community has as we continue our work to move forward. Lisa Lescarbeau will follow-up with an invitation that includes log-in information to access the Town Hall.

As you are aware, the number of COVID-19 cases in the Commonwealth are on the rise and we continue to monitor the situation closely with our local and state partners. It's important to note that at this point in the semester we have only had 5 student cases and 1 employee case. This is a testament to our campus community's adherence to health and safety protocols and testing and tracing procedures to limit exposure and spread of the virus. This has been a collective effort, I sincerely thank you.

As always, the COVID-19 website, mcla.edu/covid-19, remains functional and is a comprehensive catalogue of information as well as an archive of all campus communications related to COVID-19. We will continue to share additional information in the coming weeks.

Thank you again for the work that happened across all divisions and departments during the summer and throughout the fall to ensure a safe as possible return for our community.