

Subject: [staff-all] Returning to Carleton: Our Plan for Fall 2020

In an email from President Steven Poskanzer:

Overview

- **We expect 85% of our student body to return to Northfield in the fall, in accordance with our regular academic calendar. We settled upon this target as a result of an extensive walk-through of the campus by an epidemiologist from the MDH who is working with the State's higher education institutions. If the number of students who wish to return to Northfield exceeds our housing capacity, priority for campus housing will be given to first-year students, international students, and students who were approved to remain on campus this summer. Decisions about additional groups of students will be made after July 17.**
- **No student will be required to return to campus in order to continue their Carleton education this fall, and no faculty member will be required to teach in person. The health of our community members remains our top priority, and we are committed to making equitable accommodations for those who determine that it is in their best interest to remain off-campus.**
- **Health monitoring and personal accountability will be expected. COVID-19 testing will be administered for everyone who returns to campus, and new community standards will require all students, faculty, and staff to monitor their health daily, wear face coverings when in common spaces, and abide by new restrictions regarding gatherings and visitors.**
- **We will offer a hybrid curriculum. Some classes will be offered in person, some will be offered online, some will utilize both in-person instruction and online engagement, and some will be "mixed mode" classes with some students online and some in person. These varied delivery methods are necessary in order to manage classroom spaces and accommodate students and faculty who are working and studying remotely. All students should expect to take some online courses—including those living on campus.**
- **International students will be prioritized for in-person education. New rules recently issued by the federal government prohibit an all-online education for students on F-1 visas. To ensure our international students have the ability to remain in the United States, they will receive priority registration for in-person, hybrid, and mixed mode courses.**
- **Our Fall Term academic calendar will not change. Classes will begin on Monday, September 14, and end on Monday, November 23. However, move-in dates will change, as we plan to stagger students' arrival on campus. Please do not make travel arrangements at this time.**

Our Health Management Strategy

Testing and Caring for Our Community

Robust testing, symptom monitoring, contact tracing, and quarantine and isolation processes are essential to our ability to track the incidence of COVID-19 on campus and mitigate its spread. We have consulted with several health experts to guide our plans, including Michael Huey, MD, FACHA, former associate professor at the Emory University School of Medicine and co-author of the American College Health Association guidelines for re-opening higher education institutions; Carleton Trustee Lia Gore, MD, of the University of Colorado School of Medicine and Children's Hospital Colorado; and several epidemiologists and infectious disease specialists within the State of Minnesota.

All students, faculty, and staff will undergo a series of two tests for COVID-19 upon their initial return to campus, which together will minimize false negative results. Testing will continue throughout the term as symptoms and contact tracing require. A further regime of asymptomatic testing will be established to heighten safety. We are contracting with the Mayo Clinic to carry out this effort. Likewise, all on-campus students, faculty, and staff will be asked to self-monitor and self-report their symptoms daily in order to ensure swift action if signs of illness arise.

Because we know we cannot completely stop the spread of COVID-19, we must plan for the eventuality that the virus will still appear on campus. We are prepared for this to happen. In the event that a member of our campus community tests positive for COVID-19, we will work with the MDH to carry out tracing for close contacts both on and off campus. Affected students will follow quarantine and isolation protocols within campus residences that have been reserved for this purpose. Students in quarantine or isolation will have a designated resident assistant, receive meals in their residence, take their classes online, and have their health and wellbeing actively monitored by a member of our professional Student Health and Counseling staff. Affected faculty and staff will follow quarantine and isolation protocols at home.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

Enhanced cleaning and sanitizing practices are already in place on campus and will be expanded as students, faculty, and staff return. All public spaces will continue to be cleaned and disinfected daily in all buildings. When community transmission is low in our region, classrooms will be thoroughly sanitized at least once per day and sanitization supplies will be provided in each classroom for individual use. The frequency of classroom cleaning will be increased if the level of community transmission increases. We will flexibly schedule classes to create opportunities for additional sanitization throughout the day. We will also increase the amount of fresh air that is exchanged in classrooms, take additional steps to manage room air quality, and use outdoor learning spaces, as weather permits. Campus offices and academic departments will be supplied with proper supplies and instruction on how to keep shared office spaces clean and sanitary.

Community Standards

Carleton's culture of shared accountability and respect will become ever more important this fall. We have an obligation to protect one another and the members of

the Northfield community, and we all must take that responsibility seriously. Therefore, all on-campus students, faculty, and staff will be required to sign a covenant that sets expectations on how we will abide by the College's heightened health and safety standards. All students, faculty, staff, contractors, and visitors will be required to know and follow best practices related to physical distancing, face coverings, and frequent hand washing. These are the most important individual public health actions we can take to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep everyone safe. Among the changes we foresee for the upcoming term: all members of our campus community must wear a face covering in common spaces; visitors will be dramatically reduced and will not be permitted in campus residences; no in-person Convocations or large assemblies will be held; and the number of people attending events and social gatherings will be restricted to comply with State of Minnesota guidelines.

The Academic Experience

Changes in the Classroom

Our plan for academic spaces is to promote six-foot physical distancing and minimize transmission through infected surfaces or aerosols. This includes both modifying room layouts by reducing the density of available seats and implementing behavioral changes, such as wearing face coverings. In-person class meetings will be limited to 30 students. Some class sizes may be reduced, and some larger classes may be offered as hybrid courses, with whole-class engagement taking place online and smaller subsets of the class meeting in person.

We are now in the process of re-evaluating the capacities and seating arrangements of our classrooms in order to enable meaningful student-faculty engagement while separated by greater distances than normal. We are considering the use of other campus spaces—like Great Hall and large meeting rooms such as Weitz 236—as teaching and learning spaces and are also exploring outdoor classroom options. New building and classroom ingress and egress patterns will be established to reduce the number of face-to-face contacts during peak traffic periods. In order to support physically distanced traffic flow, we are changing the daily class schedule to provide longer, 20-minute, breaks between class periods.

Changes to the Curriculum and Course Registration

Academic departments and programs will be finalizing plans regarding course offerings and delivery modes soon. Classes that must take place in person, such as studio arts, performing arts, or science labs, will often be held with smaller numbers of students than normal. Many courses will take place as a hybrid of in-person and online instruction. Some courses will be offered simultaneously to both in-person and online students (mixed mode). About half of our courses will be offered entirely online.

In-person and hybrid courses will be available only to students living on campus or in Northfield, while mixed mode and online-only courses will be available to all students. A preliminary course listing for Fall Term will be posted online by early next

week and will designate the mode of delivery for each class. More detailed information will be available during advising days (July 27-August 4). Course registration will take place August 3-8, with priority registration for in-person courses being given to international students on F-1 visas. We will also ensure that remote students can enroll in a full complement of online and mixed mode courses.

Life Outside the Classroom

Student Housing

Our residential spaces were thoroughly reviewed by an MDH epidemiologist, and we are making adjustments to ensure appropriate physical distancing or family-style living. Students living in traditional residence halls will have fixed furniture arrangements for proper distancing. Those living in townhomes and interest houses will be considered family units who will quarantine together in the event that a house member is exposed to COVID-19.

To allow as many students to return to Northfield as possible, in addition to the Northfield Option, which permits a limited number of students to live off campus, up to 100 students may be assigned to live in rooms reserved at three Northfield hotels: the Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott and the Archer House Inn, which are within walking distance of campus, and the AmericInn, which will require personal transportation. Resident Assistants will be housed at each hotel. These hotel rooms will be assigned during the traditional Room Draw process.

Campus Dining

Our dining halls will shift to an all-day service model, allowing for greater flexibility and eliminating congestion in dining spaces. For those who wish to take their meals to go, Dining Services will deploy an app for ordering from Sayles Café and will provide to-go containers in the dining halls. Other safety measures in our dining spaces will include physically distant queues and seating arrangements; plexiglass barriers between dining staff and diners; and strict sanitizing processes for tables, utensils, and shared spaces. All diners will be required to wash their hands before entering food service lines. All food service staff will undergo pre-work temperature checks and will wear facial coverings and gloves when in contact with diners and as their jobs safely allow.

Athletics and Activities

Sports play an important role in the Carleton experience for many students, but due to health and safety concerns, our varsity, club, and other athletic sports teams and organizations will not be able to participate in traditional competition this fall. The risks associated with regular travel and contact with students from other schools are too great, both to our athletes and coaches, and to our campus community. Student-athletes will, however, be permitted to practice and train on campus, and our campus recreation spaces will be open with safety protocols in place.

Student organizations, traditions, and events are also an integral and treasured part of the Carleton experience, and we are committed to making as many of these

opportunities available as possible. Plans are still in development for field trips and other class activities, civic engagement and community work, and co-curricular activities and performances.

Returning to Campus

Student Protocols

Move-in dates and protocols will be shared following Room Draw, which will take place later this month. We plan to welcome students to campus in phases, with Resident Assistants and some peer leaders being the first to return, followed by first-year students, and then returning students.

Because we cannot house our full student population on campus this fall, and recognizing that some students may choose not to return, we need to hear from all students about your intentions for fall no later than Friday, July 17. You should communicate your plans [through this form](#), indicating whether:

- You wish to reside in campus housing
- You wish to remain off campus and learn remotely
- You wish to take a leave of absence
- You are a first-year student and wish to defer your admission to Fall Term 2021

Planning for Faculty and Staff

While faculty and staff who are working remotely should continue to do so for the time being, we are preparing for additional personnel to return to campus later in the summer and fall. We will communicate directly with faculty and staff about next steps in the coming weeks.

Financial Impact

Budget Forecast

Carleton's budget for fiscal year 2021 was approved in February before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. Subsequent changes were made to reflect evolving facts and more realistic assumptions. The College will be drawing down a significant portion of its reserves to cover one-time expenses we expect to incur according to this plan, including a comprehensive testing regime, hotel-based housing, personal protective equipment, and other necessary supplies. Taking all of this into account, Carleton expects to run a substantial deficit in fiscal year 2021, with additional projected deficits continuing annually for the following five years.

Cost-Saving Measures

The financial impact of the pandemic on the College is significant. Among the steps we are taking to reduce the deficit and to ensure Carleton's stability now and in the future are:

- limiting staff hiring
- reducing departmental budgets
- delaying some capital projects
- freezing faculty and staff wages
- a six-month suspension of College contributions to faculty and staff retirement accounts
- six-month pay cuts of 10-15% for the senior leadership team

Tuition and Fees

Tuition for the 2020-21 academic year will remain unchanged. As was the case during the recent Spring Term, students who do not live in one of the College's housing options will not be charged room and board.

Our revised budget plan for fiscal year 2021 incorporates reserves for financial aid, including contingencies for students with more financial need than might have been expected before the pandemic. We remain committed to meeting the full demonstrated financial need of every Carleton student.

Beyond the information shared in this letter and on the [COVID-19 website](#)—which continues to serve as our most comprehensive and up-to-date source of information—many of you will undoubtedly have more questions about various elements of this plan, its implementation, and its ramifications. To address those questions and to help us begin to work together to take next steps, we will be holding [a series of “town hall” meetings](#) beginning next week. In addition, in the coming days and weeks, you can expect to hear from campus offices with more detailed information on housing, registration, and all the other activities that traditionally take place leading up to a new academic year.

Let me close by expressing my admiration for the extraordinary way in which our College community has come together this spring and summer in the face of the pandemic. I continue to be humbled by how quickly our faculty pivoted to offer online courses in Spring Term, offering top-quality classes and devotedly guiding students. The faculty have doubled down without a break to think about how best to teach this fall, and have eagerly offered counsel, critique, and key insights as we formulated this plan. As always, our staff have continued to keep the wheels of Carleton turning smoothly and efficiently in both highly visible and essential but too-often unsung ways. Alumni and parents have shown understanding and generosity of spirit and giving that bolster our position. The Board of Trustees, in particular, has eagerly engaged to help us make smart choices. And—above all—our wonderful students have developed and drawn upon new stores of adaptability, perseverance, and fortitude atop the studious curiosity and innate decency and idealism that make them such a joy and privilege to teach.

I know and appreciate that all of you are willing to pitch in together to make this a singularly successful—as well as uniquely memorable!—year at Carleton. Thank you for this.