

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR



May 27, 2020

Dear Washington University community,

Now that the 2019-20 academic year has officially come to a close and we've celebrated the accomplishments of the Class of 2020 with virtual Commencement ceremonies, we're more fully turning our thoughts to the fall semester, and the incredible challenge that lies before us, to plan for a future that is still filled with many unknowns. We continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as states, counties, and cities – including, importantly, here in the St. Louis region – begin to ease stay at home restrictions and allow businesses to reopen and some normal activities to resume. We are on track to bring several hundred employees back to the Danforth Campus on June 1 as part of the first phase of our return to campus. While this is a welcome and positive step toward resuming normal operations, we remain very aware that we are still in the midst of a developing situation on the regional, national, and global level. What happens in the next several weeks will be critical in determining our next steps.

With your health and safety as our highest priority, the Fall Contingency Planning Committee continues its work. With guidance from our infectious disease experts at the School of Medicine, the committee is narrowing its focus to identifying the specific actions we will have to take this summer in order to safely bring our students and employees back to the Danforth Campus in the fall. While there is still much to consider and many decisions yet to be made, at this time, I would like to share the following updates with you.

2020-21 academic calendar

In order to accommodate a slow and deliberate return to normal operations, we are making changes to our academic calendar, to allow for a phased approach to bringing students and faculty back to the Danforth Campus. To accomplish this, we will have a staggered academic calendar, with individual schools beginning the fall and spring semesters on different dates. This will allow extra time for us to continue to gather information and prepare for the arrival of the majority of our students, while beginning the process of safely returning groups of students to campus. The calendar will be as follows:

Brown School and Law School

- First day of classes: **August 24**

- Last day of classes: **December 4**
- Reading and final exams: **December 7-16**
- Spring 2021 semester begins: **January 19**

Arts & Sciences, McKelvey Engineering, Olin Business School, Sam Fox School and University College

- First day of classes: **September 14**
- Last day of classes: **December 18**
- Final exams: Will take place remotely, **after January 1**
- Spring 2021 semester begins: **January 25**

The School of Medicine will communicate separately with students regarding academic calendars.

Scenarios for instruction

We have every intention of teaching courses in the classroom this fall and our planning is focused on returning to in-person instruction at the start of the new academic year. At the same time, we know the fall semester will not be business as usual. It will look and feel different, and we all are going to have to be flexible as we make any necessary modifications to allow for social distancing and other precautions that will be required to keep our students, faculty and staff safe. It's possible that we will need to conduct some courses – particularly those traditionally held in large lecture halls – online, or through a hybrid model with some students in the classroom and others participating remotely. We still need to work through numerous details, and plans may change along the way depending on how the situation develops, but *our ultimate goal is to bring students and faculty back into the classroom as much as possible*. For students who would prefer to continue to take classes online, we will offer remote options for most courses.

Timeline for final decision-making

We are eagerly looking forward to welcoming our students and their families back to campus for the start of the fall semester. In order to allow everyone time to plan for their return to St. Louis, we will provide additional details about our plans for fall **no later than July 31**. At this time, we will share specific information about how instruction will be delivered, the health and safety measures we all will follow upon our return, and additional information, including plans for student orientation, residential housing, dining and other campus services.

While we continue to move forward very intentionally with our plans for the fall semester, it's important to reiterate that every step we take will be informed by public health guidance with your safety and well-being as our top priority. *Nothing is more important than keeping our community safe*. As hopeful as we are that we will be able to welcome students and employees back to campus in August and September, we also are mindful that a lot could

change in the coming weeks – for better or worse – and that there may still be some tough decisions ahead. We must remain nimble and be prepared to make further adjustments to our academic planning as circumstances continue to evolve throughout the semester. Our collective strength and ingenuity have served us well so far, and we will continue to rely on those attributes as we head into this next chapter.

Please know that we are committed to doing whatever is necessary to give our students the Washington University experience they have come to expect, and to ensure that the university will eventually come through this historic crisis stronger than ever before. Achieving these goals will require all of us sticking together and doing our part to see this through, in support of a place that means so much to us all.

I want to thank you once again for your patience and resilience as we continue to persevere in these trying times. I'm incredibly proud of how our community has risen to the occasion. Your support and dedication have been nothing short of inspiring.

Sincerely,

Andrew D. Martin
Chancellor

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