

May 12, 2020

Dear Concordians,

A Time of Celebration

Last week we celebrated the Class of 2020 and their accomplishments. They remained strong to the finish in the midst of worldwide turmoil and uncertainty. Thank you to everyone who contributed to our [virtual Baccalaureate Service](#) and [virtual Commencement ceremony](#). These are impressive productions that honor God and our graduates.

As the spring semester draws to a close, it's also a good time to celebrate one another. Each and every member of the student body, faculty, and staff deserves credit for coming together to complete the semester in the face of challenges unlike any in living memory. I am proud of the continued strength of our entire University community, which echoes the long tradition of strength that has sustained us for 156 years.

Plans for the Fall

I recognize that each of you is also eager for guidance about how we will proceed next semester. I'm delighted to announce that Concordia University Chicago plans to be back on campus in the fall! We intend to reopen the campus to the public, hold classes in person, welcome students back into our residence halls and employees back to their offices, and host campus activities. Concordia-Chicago is a community regardless of physical distance, but the nucleus of that community exists in the experience of campus life together.

Our plans for the fall are guided by two important tenets: continuing to ensure the health and safety of all members of the University community, and continuing to provide an exceptional, Christ-centered educational experience for each and every student, regardless of their method of study.

While we will strive for campus life in the fall to resemble normalcy as much as possible, we also know full well that it may be a new "normal." As we continue to follow state and federal guidelines in our response to COVID-19, please know that our own Emergency Response Team is providing outstanding guidance to the administration regarding future campus operations.

To continue to meet our obligations to both students and employees, we are considering and planning for multiple possible scenarios. Doing so now will help the University remain nimble as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve over the summer. As we look toward a return to campus:

- We understand the significance that enhanced public-health and social distancing precautions will play in ensuring the well-being of the University community. We are already meeting best practices for sanitation and cleaning, and are developing additional safety protocols to support all operations throughout our facilities.
- We are already well-positioned to continue providing both online and in-person learning experiences, and are building new hybrid models to offer a mix of the two. As an intimately-sized campus offering an average student-to-teacher ratio of 10 to 1, we can more easily pivot to providing on campus courses that adhere with social distancing regulations.

- We are offering additional financial support to students through the Gard Student Assistance Fund. Recognizing the significant financial hardship that many are facing, the fund provides immediate financial support to cover essential expenses for qualified students. We are also in the process of determining the best means to make government aid available via the CARES Act to those students who are eligible.
- We will continue to ensure that our response plans and procedures follow the recommendations of public health agencies like the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control. In addition, we are strengthening our existing relationships with local healthcare and municipal entities including West Suburban Hospital, the Cook County Department of Public Health, and the Village of River Forest.

As has been the case throughout the University's response to COVID-19, you can continue to expect regular and transparent communication regarding our status and operations.

The Ultimate Gift

In spite of the unknowns that swirl around us, we rest in the assurance that God is with us in Christ. His ultimate gift to us is Christ Himself. As promised in Isaiah 14:10, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

I look forward to seeing you on campus this fall!

Grace and peace,

Dr Dawn

Russell P. Dawn, DPhil, JD
President

Concordia University Chicago

7400 Augusta Street
River Forest, IL 60305
708-209-3003

Truth. Freedom. Vocation.