

October 16, 2020

Students, Faculty, and Staff-

During the past month, several different groups have worked to make decisions related to Concordia-Chicago's plans for the spring semester. As you might imagine, discussions and deliberations were sometimes difficult, as responding to COVID-19 comes with daily changes and challenges. From day one of the pandemic, we have consistently kept the safety of the University community as the guiding tenet for our operational decisions. In addition, each decision has been made with an eye toward the best course of action based on the knowledge at hand as well as the available resources. Over the course of the last nine months, our understanding and response to COVID-19 have evolved accordingly. After much prayer and detailed research and planning, we are now at a point where we are able to take the next step in opening our campus further, which will provide additional opportunities for our students.

Today I am pleased to announce that this spring, Concordia-Chicago will begin offering courses in a hyflex format. What this means is that a portion of the courses that were offered on-campus prior to the pandemic will now have a combined face-to-face and remote learning format. This is currently the most common model on college campuses and one toward which we are ready to move safely.

### **Coursework**

This decision obviously has the greatest impact on our traditional undergraduate students for whom in-person learning is an integral part of their educational experience. Courses that we expect to offer in this format include SBS-1995, and all Art, Music, and Theater courses. Other courses might also be included. Our team in the Registrar's office is working hard to recode all courses that will be offered in a hyflex format as such. We anticipate this will be completed later this semester, at which point students will be able to see which of their courses have pivoted to this format.

Hyflex classes will provide students with the ability to decide how they would like to participate in many classes this spring. We are proud to be able to provide students with choices in their education. Those who wish to take advantage of in-person learning may do so, and we look forward to welcoming these additional students back to campus in January. Those who wish to continue learning entirely remotely, for whatever reason, are also welcome to do so.

It is important to note that Illinois remains under Phase 4 operating guidelines, which limit our total classroom capacity. In some cases, we will use alternate spaces around campus, such as large meeting rooms, as classrooms. In other cases, students who choose to learn face-to-face will likely also still attend some sessions remotely. We're working out the final details for each course and we ask for your patience as we do so.

## **Housing**

Growth in our on-campus student population has an obvious effect on housing capacity. With the goal of continuing to maintain the safest possible environment on campus, our plan is to maintain as many single residence hall rooms as possible during the spring semester. All residential students who currently live on-campus will maintain their housing assignments. Those who have been remote, but desire to live on-campus in the spring semester, will need to complete a housing application. The Spring 2021 housing application will be open very soon. Please watch your CUC email for additional information from the Housing Office in the coming weeks.

## **Academic Calendar**

While some universities around the country have announced changes to their academic calendars for the spring, Concordia-Chicago has decided that it will maintain its calendar as originally scheduled. This means that courses will begin on Jan. 11, 2021. It also means that we will maintain the previously announced dates for Spring Break, Easter Weekend, and a virtual Spring Commencement. We feel it is important to keep Spring Break on the calendar as it will offer a much needed mental and physical break for our traditional undergrads, as well as the faculty and staff who support them. In addition, we anticipate that some athletics teams and music ensembles may still pursue limited travel during this period.

In an effort to mitigate the potential spread of COVID-19 on campus, all members of the on-campus community will be required to get tested for COVID-19 at the start of the semester, as well as after Spring Break and Easter Weekend. This mandatory testing will be conducted on campus and will be available at no cost. Additional details will be available as the spring semester progresses.

## **COVID-19 Testing**

As you are now aware, regular on-campus COVID-19 testing is slated to begin next week. Please refer to the separate memo regarding details about your participation. We are confident that regular testing of on-campus populations will help us to further identify both symptomatic and asymptomatic cases, further supporting our ongoing efforts to mitigate the virus's spread. In addition to the plan announced for fall semester testing, our response team is working diligently to develop an even more comprehensive testing plan for the spring. That plan will be integral to ensuring that CUC remains a safe and healthy place to study and work as we increase the size of our on-campus population and interactions between students, faculty, and staff.

## **Athletics**

The NCAA and NACC are both working toward plans to allow full athletic seasons, including gameplay and some regional travel. The NCAA has developed strict testing protocols for all collegiate student-athletes, which CUC is obligated to follow in order to participate in games. As has been the case this entire academic year, each sport at CUC will be governed by the broad CUC athletics COVID-19 plan along with the detailed sport-specific plan. Team coaches will remain the main point of contact for team plans.

## **Employees**

Previously announced employment policies and procedures related to amended COVID-19 operations will remain in place for the spring semester. Academic leadership, including the deans, are working directly with faculty to determine which courses will be offered in a hybrid format, which will have an effect on their presence on campus.

We continue to recommend that meetings be held in a virtual environment when possible. For the spring semester, in particular, this will help make sure that meeting rooms can be converted for classroom use when necessary. And of course, we'll continue to support limited interactions as part of our overall social distancing strategy.

All existing employee accommodation requests to work remotely are valid through the end of the calendar year, ending Dec. 31. Faculty and staff who wish to continue working remotely in any capacity for the spring semester are asked to complete and submit a new accommodation request. Human Resources will provide additional details about how to access the most current forms.

The present success of our fall semester, including keeping the number of COVID-19 cases on campus exceptionally low, is due to the continued diligence of students, faculty, and staff. It's important that we stay equally dedicated to the procedures that have become the norm both on and off campus, including social distancing, wearing a facemask, and adhering to University, CDC, and IDPH protocols. Please continue to lift each other up and provide the support needed to move forward with the second half of this academic year. For a quick refresher, be sure to take a few minutes to re-watch our [Cougar Care Commitment video](#).

God's richest blessings on a successful completion of the fall semester.

Grace to you,

*Dr Dawn*

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