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Subject: A Message from Provost Ann E. Cudd



University of Pittsburgh Office of the Provost

Dear Colleagues:

I hope that the weeks since the close of the spring semester have been calmer ones for you. I remain in awe of—and so grateful for—all that you did to realize success during extraordinarily challenging days.

Though we are still experiencing the uncertainty of the pandemic's course, I want to provide an update on what determinations we have made as we look ahead to the start of the fall semester on the Oakland campus. I hope that the information helps to answer some basic questions, and I ask for your understanding since many details continue to be worked out. I will keep you updated as additional aspects move into place. My goal is to provide some initial guideposts that will help us move forward as a community into a successful fall.

As you know, the [Task Force on Reimagining Pitt Education](#) worked throughout the month of May, collecting input from faculty, staff, and students and considering ideas from across academia about how best to teach and learn in these uncertain times. The decisions and strategies I am sharing have been made against a backdrop of some “givens” in light of COVID-19:

- Following guidance from local, state, and national health experts is central to our strategy. Hence, we will need to de-densify campus spaces to support physical distancing.
- The number of persons in a given classroom cannot exceed a maximum, which means that all students enrolled in a class may not be able to attend class in person at all times.
- We must also follow guidelines to ensure that residence halls and dining facilities follow de-densifying best practices.
- Some students and faculty will not be able—for a number of reasons—to attend or to teach in person for part or all of the semester.

Fall Academic Calendar, Breaks, and Final Exam Period

Please note that important adjustments have been made to the academic calendar to help minimize the possible spread of COVID-19. The academic semester will continue to be structured within a 15-week window to remain in compliance with Title IV funding regulations.

- Fall term classes will begin on August 19, 2020, and end November 20, 2020.
- Classes will take place on Labor Day, September 7, 2020.
- Students will not return to campus after the Thanksgiving break.
- There will be an extended final exam period for the fall semester that includes the possibility of holding in-person exams on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving and holding remote exams the week after Thanksgiving.
- In scheduling final exams, priority for in-person final exam room assignments will be given to “departmental exams.”

Flex@Pitt

In consideration of these constraints, we plan to implement what we are calling Flex@Pitt. This teaching model will enable classes to be taught in a manner that provides an exceptional educational experience regardless of whether the students attend in person, remotely, synchronously, or asynchronously. All courses should utilize Canvas.

Much more information and guidance about Flex@Pitt will be provided in the days and weeks ahead.

So that we can maximize this new model, classrooms will be upgraded with technology to optimize course delivery. I believe that this model will allow us to respond with flexibility and with innovative, accessible approaches as we navigate this new terrain while continuing to deliver academic excellence.

Course Development Resources and Support

[The University Center for Teaching and Learning](#) stands by to help you design your courses. The center is developing even more resources to help. Additional details and online resources will soon be available. Likewise, [Pitt IT](#) can provide technological support as you continue to plan for the semester ahead.

Looking Ahead

I know that we are doing everything in our power to see the day when we will welcome students back to campus. If it were only up to us, that would

happen in a heartbeat. But we must and will continue to monitor the pandemic and its impact and place the health and safety of everyone in the community as our starting point for our efforts forward.

I am so appreciative for your understanding and patience, as well as your perseverance and professional dedication. Working together, we will chart a course that ensures that our University and the incredible students we serve will emerge stronger and more resilient.

Hail to Pitt!

Ann E. Cudd
Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor