
Subject: June 4, 2020: Covid-19 Update, Planning for Fall

Date: Thursday, June 4, 2020 at 10:21:02 AM Eastern Daylight Time

From: ForQNews

Dear Queens Faculty and Staff,

We are all eager to plan our fall schedules and learn of any changes to the academic calendar that Queens will need to make in response to the ongoing global pandemic. As a smaller campus community, we can move and react quickly. This enables us to wait for the most up to date information to make the best-informed decisions, prioritizing your health and safety. Our best example of this important advantage was demonstrated in March as we successfully pivoted our on-campus program of nearly 700 courses to virtual modalities in less than a week. As we balance these important decisions with your need to plan, we will continue to be transparent, offering as much information as possible as it develops.

As we stated in in prior messages, we are actively planning for in-person classes this fall and undergraduate students returning to residence halls - but we know there will be significant modifications. We are using the evolving CDC and the American College Health Association guidelines, as well as state and local regulations to inform our decisions about how to safely and responsibly convene.

We plan to provide our specific calendar and housing plan by July 3. Notwithstanding, we hope that it is helpful to you to share some of the things we are considering.

Academic Calendar

We are actively monitoring the latest information from the CDC and WHO regarding if and when there may be a resurgence of COVID-19. You have likely seen other large universities make the decision to start early and eliminate breaks to minimize travel to and from campus. We are considering these and other options.

Modality and Classrooms

As we continue to prioritize the in-person classroom experience you desire, we know that we will have to mitigate the risks of Covid-19 transmission by reducing the density of students in classrooms. Additionally, some of our professors and students are in high risk groups who may not be able to come to campus. Our faculty and academic leadership are diligently preparing ways to ensure that all on-ground courses can be flexible and accessible in multiple ways.

Campus Density – Residence Halls

While we are committed to having students live on campus, we know that we need to reduce density to keep students safe and minimize the risk of an outbreak of COVID-19. That means we will have fewer students living on campus, and housing assignments will be adjusted as necessary. Among the many scenarios we are considering are more single rooms, new off-campus options, and exempting upper class students from one semester or year of their residency requirement. We are also planning for quarantine space.

Athletics

We continue to collaborate with the leadership at the SAC and the NCAA to map a comprehensive plan for athletes to safely return to practice, training and competition.

Campus Density – Faculty / Staff

We also expect to have a return to work plan no later than July 3. We are still developing the specifics, but we know the plan will have a phased approach. Most importantly, those of our community members in high risk groups will not be expected to return to campus until we know they will be safe. For this reason, employees should continue to hold meetings via Ring Central. Later in June, there will be a confidential process through Human Resources that will enable you to indicate if you are in a high risk group.

New Normal on Campus

Between now and when you return to campus, we are working hard to prepare a safe environment. We are ordering masks and creating social distancing signs to manage crowds in common areas. We are working with dining services to provide safe, socially distant options. Campus services is creating a plan to frequently clean high traffic areas and touch-points and offer more sanitation stations. We are also working on a healthcare partnership to help us track, trace and contain any potential cases of Covid-19.

What You Can Expect

Between now and July 3, stay tuned to your email. Various departments may reach out with information specific to you, or to solicit your input which may help inform important policy and practice choices. No later than July 3 we will announce our academic calendar and residential housing plan. Later in the summer, students will learn about any changes to the currently planned modality of their specific courses.

Thank you for your trust and patience. Please be assured, we have your best interest at the heart of all our decisions. We look forward to seeing you very soon.

Sincerely,

Your Senior Leadership Team

Dan Lugo
James Bullock
Dr. Sarah Fatherly
Maria del Carmen Flores-Mills
Jen Johnson
Rich Majerus
Matt Packey