

Student Spring 21 Return

Dear Students,

With the spring semester just around the corner we want to update you on MCLA's opening plan. This email outlines our semester opening procedures and contains details regarding move-in for resident students, COVID-19 testing for all students, and additional key information

The health and safety of the community is our top priority as we prepare to return to in person learning and on campus living this semester. We are carefully monitoring a number of COVID-19 metrics as we did in preparation for the fall, including state, county and local case numbers and positivity rates, Center for Diseases Control (CDC) and Department of Public Health (DPH) guidance, and guidance for higher education from the Massachusetts Department of Education (MA DOE).

We have maintained as safe an environment as possible. During the fall semester we were one of the safest places in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. *While we did have a handful of COVID-19 cases among our community this fall, we had no spread from these cases on campus and a positivity rate that was 10 times lower than that in the state.* We attribute this to the careful planning and protocols established in accordance with the best advice of DPH and CDC, and a robust testing and contact tracing process mandated by the state. These protocols will continue in the spring, with an even more robust testing program that will result in increased testing of all our populations.

Academic Delivery

Class begin Tuesday, January 26. While residence halls will be open during this first week, all courses will be online to ensure we follow the appropriate testing and quarantine protocols for both residential and commuter students.

Beginning February 1, we will return to our blended learning course design, and staggered attendance in the classroom. This model combines our signature small liberal arts face-to-face practices with an accessible technological environment.

There will be no Spring Break this year but an additional day has been added to the President's Day weekend, and the recess will begin on Friday, February 12.

Spring Course Registration and Add/Drop

Students who have not yet registered for spring courses should immediately contact their adviser or Registrar's office at registrar@mcla.edu or (413) 662-5216.

The Add/Drop period for the Spring 2021 semester will begin January 26 and end February 3. Like last semester this process will be conducted entirely online.

Resident Student Move-in and COVID-19 Testing

Resident student move-in will take place January 23, 24, and 25 by appointment between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Residential Programs and Services will contact you in the next day or two with more details.

All resident students are highly encouraged to take a molecular COVID-19 test 72 hours or less prior to their move-in day and bring a negative test result with them. Those who can do so will have shorter quarantine periods if they are coming directly from their home via car. Testing sites in your area can be found on your state's Department of Public Health websites.

Testing is your first stop on your assigned move-in day. All residents will be required to test before moving into their residence area and will be required to quarantine until released by Health Services. If you were tested in the Fall, your consent form is still valid. If you are a new resident for Spring, please be sure to complete the [Student Consent to SARS-CoV-2 Testing Form](#) and bring it with you to the testing site along with your student I.D.

COVID-19 testing will take place in the Campus Center Amsler Gymnasium between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Please note that if you sign up for a 6 p.m. move-in appointment, you will need to arrive early to test before 6:00 p.m. This is necessary due to the pick-up times by our courier to get the day's tests to the lab in Cambridge to ensure swift return of results. Anyone arriving too late to test, will NOT be allowed to move-in as scheduled that day, so please be sure to leave adequate travel time. Once tested you will receive a testing receipt that will allow you to check in and pick up your keys.

All residents will be required to have TWO negative COVID-19 tests before release from quarantine, and all students will be expected to test again on day 5 or 6 after arrival. The length of time a student will be required to quarantine is based on upon how they arrive on campus as follows:

- **Students arriving by CAR, directly from their home and accompanied only by someone who also lives in that home, and who bring a negative COVID-19 test taken 72 hours prior to arrival**
 - Pre-arrival test serves as the **first** negative test
 - Move-in test serves as the **second** negative test and will release student from quarantine
 - Student will test again on the date indicated on their testing receipt (Day 5 test)

- **Students arriving by CAR, directly from their home and accompanied only by someone who also lives in that home, who are NOT able to bring a negative COVID-19 test taken 72 hours prior to arrival**
 - Move-in test serves as **first** negative test
 - Day 5 test taken on the date specified on testing receipt serves as **second** negative test which will be used to release student from quarantine

- **Students travelling to campus by a plane, train, bus, OR in a car with someone who is not in their immediate household, regardless of any pre-arrival testing** will be required to test negative twice on campus
 - Move-in test will serve as **first** negative test
 - Day 5 test taken on date specified on testing receipt will serve as **second** negative test and will result in release from quarantine
 - A negative test taken in advance of arrival cannot be used as the first negative test because any infection acquired while traveling to campus would not be present in the move-in test.

Asymptomatic students required to quarantine will be able to leave their residence area to pick up meals and are expected to return to their residence area room immediately.

Before coming to campus on your scheduled move-in day, please be sure you are feeling well and free of any potential COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, sore throat, congestion, headache, etc. If you are not feeling well, please do NOT come to campus; contact the COVID Hotline (413-662-5550) and ask to re-schedule your move-in. Similarly, if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, please do not come to campus, even if you do not have symptoms until you are sure that you have not contracted the virus. Please call the COVID hotline (413-662-5550) for further instructions. You will not be penalized for taking this pre-caution and we will make arrangements for you to start your classes remotely, should that be necessary.

Additional information:

MA Travel Order

All non-residents of Massachusetts and all residents returning to Massachusetts from out of state are subject to the MA Travel Order (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order>). Please note that this applies not only to students but to the family members and helpers who plan to accompany a student on their return to MCLA. This order requires you to 1) Complete the [Massachusetts Travel Form](#) (unless you are coming from Hawaii) and 2) Quarantine for 10 days or produce a negative COVID-19 test result that has been administered up to 72-hours prior to your arrival in Massachusetts.

Leaving Campus

In an effort to keep our campus community as safe as possible, we encourage you to think strongly about remaining on MCLA's campus as much as possible. All trips to travel home or frequent trips to the surrounding area or downtown greatly compromise your safety and that of the community. Given the current high rates of positivity in the state and elsewhere, we strongly encourage you to minimize your travel off campus until the curve has been flattened.

Commuter Student COVID-19 Testing

Commuter students are mandated to be tested once a month, including a test before February 1. While there are now three Stop the Spread sites in Berkshire County, it is highly recommended that you continue to utilize MCLA for your asymptomatic testing needs. Our operation ensures the quickest results and does not require you to then submit proof that you have tested to Health Services as they will already have that record.

Commuter students may test during the hours listed below. It is advised that you test as close to your first in person classes as possible, understanding that it may take up to 48 hours for your results to be returned. Commuters who have not tested negative prior to the start of in person classes should not attend class until they do.

Sat., January 23 through Mon., January 25	10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Tues., January 26 through Fri., January 30	10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Testing will be in the Amsler Center Gymnasium and no appointment is necessary to test prior to the start of classes. If you have never tested at MCLA, you must complete the [Student Consent to SARS-CoV-2 Testing Form](#) and bring it with you to the testing site along with your student I.D.

If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and/or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, do NOT come to campus. We encourage you to contact Health Services and your primary care provider for guidance. The Berkshire Health Systems COVID-19 hotline is another resource: 855-262-5465.

Additional Testing and Quarantine Information and Protocols for ALL Students

The following information will aid us in keeping our campus as safe as possible:

- Students who had COVID-19 in the last 90 days should let Health Services know by emailing them at Healthservices@mcla.edu prior to coming to campus and bring their last positive test results to move-in/first testing appointment.
- Students who have been vaccinated for COVID-19 are still subject to all testing protocols. While the vaccine will protect these students from illness from COVID-19, there is no evidence to suggest they cannot be infected with COVID and be contagious to others. This is in-line with Massachusetts Department of Public Health guidelines.
- Student testing consent forms from the fall are still valid. Those who have not tested previously on campus should complete [Student Consent to SARS-CoV-2 Testing Form](#).

Campus Dining Information

Campus dining services for resident students will open for the semester beginning with lunch on Saturday, January 23. All meals will be take-out only for first 2 weeks until students complete our return to campus testing process. The Sidekick app will be running from the first meal to encourage advance ordering.

COVID-19 Canvas Site for Students

We have developed a Canvas Course for Spring 2021 that contains all the necessary information MCLA students will need about COVID-19 this semester, including prevention measures, MCLA COVID protocols, state mandates and DPH guidelines, quarantine and isolation procedures, and testing sign-up links so that you will be able to choose your surveillance testing time and receive reminders of upcoming tests right within Canvas.

All students will be enrolled in this course prior to the start of the semester and the course will be updated regularly so that you will have all the necessary COVID information in one place.

Trailblazer Agreement

We want to remind you that the [Trailblazer Agreement](#) remains in effect for Spring 2021. If you need to refresh your memory of the terms of this agreement you will find your form in the Forms History section of My Forms on the Campus Portal. New students or returning students who have not signed the Trailblazer Agreement should follow link to do so before arrival on campus or to the first day of classes. All students will be held to the expectations outlined in the Trailblazer Agreement, whether they have signed it or not.

State Mandated Flu Vaccination

Massachusetts public health officials established an influenza immunization mandate for all students attending Massachusetts colleges and universities. Students are expected to receive this vaccination by the extended deadline of February 28, 2021 (previously set as December 31, 2021). Those who have received their immunization should submit documentation of this to HealthServices@mcla.edu as soon as possible if they have not already done so. Those who have not yet been immunized should contact their doctor, local pharmacy, or medical clinic to schedule an appointment immediately. We will not make accommodations to allow students who have not gotten this immunization to shift to remote learning, so please make sure you take care of this as soon as possible.

MCLA Pittsfield

Classes at MCLA's 66 Allen Street campus will begin on January 26 online and shift to the hybrid/in-person model beginning February 1. Graduate and cohort students enrolled in courses that meet *in person* at 66 Allen Street are mandated to be tested once a month, including a test before in-person classes begin on February 1. Students who are fully remote are exempt from the testing requirement.

Students are eligible to test for free at MCLA during our regular testing hours and the extended first week schedule detailed in the Commuter section of this message. If it is more convenient for you to test at a Stop the Spread site or other community site, you are welcome to do so and submit your documentation to Health Services by emailing them at Healthservices@mcla.edu.

You can continue to find additional information and an archive of communications on MCLA's COVID-19 website; you may contact the MCLA COVID hotline at 413-662-5550 for questions

related to COVID-19 and our campus return plan. The hotline is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday. You can also reach out to me directly with any questions. We look forward to welcoming you back to campus.

Sincerely,
Cathy

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