

Dear Trailblazers,

As many of you prepare to finish the semester and celebrate the holiday season with family and loved ones, I hope you have time to rest and recharge. MCLA was successful at keeping COVID-19 to a minimum this fall and we plan to stay vigilant in our precautions so that we may be able to return to in person learning again this spring.

We don't want to wish this time away but we do want you to be prepared for the spring semester ahead. This message will address some of the questions you may have about the spring as we are already busily planning for your return. While there are still a number of details that will depend on the latest guidance and COVID-19 trends at the local and state levels, we wanted to provide as much information as possible at this point as the fall semester winds down.

Spring 2021 Academic Calendar

Classes for the spring semester will begin on Tuesday, January 26. Similar to fall, MCLA's spring 2021 plan features blended learning course design, and staggered attendance in the classroom. Once again, 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 2021 COVID-19 Testing

In order to comply with the updated testing guidance for higher education from the state, MCLA will expand our spring testing program which will be implemented with guidance from our local public health partners. Similar to the fall, we will test all residential students upon move-in and then once-a-week for the next two weeks. After that, we will move to surveillance testing, with fifty percent of resident students tested each week. We are also expanding commuter student testing, with mandatory testing of all commuter students to begin the semester and then mandatory once-a-month testing. The spring plan represents an increase of approximately 3,000 tests over the fall semester.

Spring Course Registration

Any students who have not yet registered for spring courses should contact the Registrar's office at registrar@mcla.edu or (413) 662-5216.

State Mandated Flu Vaccination

In August 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 December 31, 2020. 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.

There are some limited exceptions to this mandate, which Health Services staff can explain. Students who have not provided proof of influenza vaccination will not be able to come to the MCLA campus for any reason, including attending classes, work, using the library, and

living on campus. 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.

Move-In

We are working on the residential move-in plan intended to follow a similar model to the fall. Students will sign up for a date/time to move-in over a period of a few days before classes begin and will be required to test for COVID before checking in. Resident students will receive an email from Residential Programs and Services in a few days outlining more information about the assignment and move-in processes.

Students who do not currently live on campus but would like to do so this spring may contact rps@mcla.edu to make arrangements to do so. There are campus housing grants available to assist in covering these costs. Please contact Student Financial Services to discuss your eligibility for funds.

Spring Billing and FAFSA Reminder

Bills for the spring 2021 semester are due December 21. Please contact the Office of Student Financial Services at 413-662-5230 or email studentaccounts@mcla.edu with any billing or payment questions. FAFSA is open for the 21-22 academic year! Renew online at www.fafsa.gov. The priority deadline for funding is January 1. If you need any assistance completing the FAFSA, please contact the Office of Student Financial Services at 413-662-5219 or email aid@mcla.edu for an appointment. The office is happy to assist you with getting this important step completed.

Spring Semester Activities

With the uncertainty of what the spring semester will look like, you will still have plenty of opportunities to engage with your fellow classmates and get involved on campus. Many of our clubs and organizations will continue to plan events that encourage participation ranging from trivia nights, regular clubs meetings, and more. It is essential for students to stay connected with each other and build lasting friendships outside of the classroom environment. Consider trying out clubs or events that in a normal year you wouldn't or taking on a leadership role you never saw yourself in. To join clubs, view your non-academic profile, and see what is happening on campus go to <https://mcla.presence.io/>

Wrap-Up of Fall 2020 and Campus Resources

Even though we are completing the semester with remote learning all of our campus services are still available to assist you as the semester comes to an end. I encourage you to continue to reach out to CSSE, Health Services, and Counseling Services for support you may need at this time. The Library continues to provide services as you complete final projects.

As always, the COVID-19 website, mcla.edu/covid-19, remains functional and is a comprehensive catalogue of information as well as an archive of all campus communications related to COVID19. We will continue to share additional information in the coming weeks. Thank you for taking the health of our campus community seriously and doing your part to keep our fall semester as safe as possible.

Best wishes as you complete the semester.

Cathy

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