

Subject: Important information regarding SRU's spring 2021 semester
Date: Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 9:09:26 AM Eastern Daylight Time
From: Office of the President
To: SRU Stakeholder

Oct. 8, 2020

To the University Community:

I hope this email finds you well. I'd like to thank our entire University community for working together to meet the challenge of making our transition from traditional instruction to a mostly distance learning model as successful as possible.

The pandemic has asked a lot from each of us – particularly emotionally and mentally – and you all have responded wonderfully. I am proud of not only what we have accomplished academically but how we, as a community, have responsibly approached mitigation efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19. Whether it has been through social distancing, the wearing of masks or other measures, we have worked hard to keep each other safe and healthy and that is reflected in the [low number of positive cases reported among our campus community](#).

While I'm grateful to everyone for being mindful of our current situation, now is not the time to let our guard down. This is the time that we should double down on our efforts to keep our campus and community as COVID-free as possible.

With that in mind, the University is announcing today, Oct. 8, that the spring 2021 semester will be conducted in the same manner as the fall 2020 semester with an approximately 80/20 split of online to in-person instruction.

We understand this continued approach is not necessarily what many people wish would happen, myself included, but it is one that has proven to work as evidenced by our low case count. Also, this approach will provide for the continued health and safety of our students, faculty and staff, which, as always, is our top priority. It is our continued adherence to mitigation efforts that will hopefully help us return to our pre-pandemic methods of operation in fall 2021.

A key factor in the decision to continue on our already-established path is the overlap of COVID-19 and flu season which has many epidemiologists concerned. A growing consensus among health experts is that the U.S. will be facing a dual spread of the coronavirus and the flu that will complicate diagnoses and present a double burden on the health care system. Under these conditions, more on-campus activity would certainly overwhelm our University's ability to provide health care and safe, disinfected learning environments.

As we have from the very beginning of the pandemic, we will monitor this fluid situation in consultation with local, state and federal health agencies. Should conditions change for the better, an examination of how best to proceed with expanded in-person activities in the spring would be discussed; however, those decisions will be dependent on the status of the science surrounding the pandemic as well as our ability to pivot successfully.

We recognize that this health crisis is evolving and we remain steadfast in our commitment to the health and safety of the Slippery Rock University community and the communities in which we live and work. I'm continually inspired by the collective resolve of our students, faculty and staff to overcome the recent challenges, which gives me greater confidence that we will meet whatever demands that lie ahead of us and that we will succeed together.

Sincerely,

William J. Behre, Ph.D.
President