

Aug. 12, 2020

Dear Students:

Whether this is your first semester with us or you're kicking off your senior year, welcome (back) to The Rock! Like all of you, we wish we were not still in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we expect that you'll still experience a rewarding fall semester, be it on campus or at a distance.

University faculty and staff have spent the past few months thoughtfully preparing to provide everyone with a safe environment and opportunities to succeed, even in the face of the unwelcome change and uncertainty brought about by the pandemic. We believe that we have come up with a plan to meet those challenges and that we have the ability to adapt quickly should circumstances dictate it.

We understand the strong desire of many of you for in-person learning. While we too wish more courses could be offered face-to-face, the health and safety of our entire campus community, as well as our neighbors, has necessitated the shift to mostly online learning this fall. The past couple of months have seen COVID infection rates on the rise among college-aged individuals. In addition, overall infection rates have risen in key areas of western Pennsylvania and Ohio. Even people who show no COVID symptoms should still take precautions given the chance that they could infect others who are perhaps more vulnerable. As such, we ask that even if you're living and studying from a distance, that you follow the guidelines we have created for all people on-campus: please wear a mask when with others or out in public, practice physical distancing at all times, and avoid large gatherings.

If you are going to be on campus, we'd like to provide you with a sense of what things will look like and how you can help us have a safe and healthy semester.

Today signals the official start to our annual "Week of Welcome" at the University. With that, we encourage and invite all students to participate in our wide variety of WOW events. We have put together a number of programs designed to prepare people on what to expect this fall and how they can still be an active member of the SRU community during the pandemic. For more information and to view the schedule, please visit the [WOW webpage](#).

Although the campus is open for business, please understand that we will have limited staff and faculty on-site any given day. Many individuals will continue to work from home unless their job duties require them to be on campus. Our request of you is that if you need to access an office, service or faculty member, that you first reach out to them via email or phone. Whenever possible, we encourage all individuals or groups to meet virtually rather than in-person to help mitigate the spread of the virus. Academic buildings and campus services, including the Aebersold Recreation Center, Smith Student Center and Bailey Library, will be open but will look somewhat different in terms of room capacities and layout in order to encourage physical distancing.

**Facial coverings are required of everyone inside all campus buildings. If you come to campus, you need to wear a mask.** All SRU students will be provided with a washable, SRU-branded mask. Students who live on campus will be provided these upon arrival. For those students who live off campus, you are invited to pick one up during the first week of classes at one of our “Ask Me” tents.

Any student who is ill or experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19 should contact Student Health Services at 724.738.2051. SHS will be able to provide you with guidance and connect you to testing options. Students with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 are expected to self-isolate until cleared by a medical professional. This means the individual(s) in question should not leave their apartment, residence hall room or other places of residence for a period of 10-14 days. SHS can guide all students through this process regardless of whether they live on or off campus.

While this fall semester won't be everything you'd hoped for, you will still have many meaningful opportunities to engage with one another in and out of the classroom, whether virtually or at a safe physical distance.

Working together – and following the guidelines we have established as a University – will help all of us move past this pandemic and help strengthen our community.

We wish you good health and success this fall semester, and, as always, LET'S GO ROCK!

Sincerely,

William Behre, Ph.D.  
President

David Wilmes, Ph.D.  
Chief Student Affairs Officer