

June 5, 2020

Dear University Community:

Many of you have been asking what SRU is planning for the fall. I am writing to let you know that our current plans, in light of the newest guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, includes resuming face-to-face classes.

In receiving this news, please understand that the health and safety of our community remains our top priority. As such, these plans may be altered if conditions at the beginning of or during the semester do not permit meeting in person.

With that said, let me give you some insight into our current thinking. Some of this has been included in messages to various members of the University community, but it is worth repeating here so that we are all on the same page.

While all of our plans will respect the collective bargaining agreements that we have with our employees, we will not have the same structure we experienced in the pre-pandemic environment. In fact, we will be adding new protocols and practices to keep our campus as safe as possible. Still, even with these modified structures in place, we will never be able to guarantee that the virus will not emerge on our campus. Our goal is to minimize that chance and to respond immediately and effectively if it does occur.

A return to campus in person will involve a hybrid fall semester. This structure is still being designed but it will likely include synchronous, face-to-face courses that will also be available via Zoom or a similar technology for those students who cannot, or do not want to, be in class. Course sections will be divided so that classrooms are less crowded. At any point, a student can choose to attend any or all classes remotely by viewing a course session via distance technology.

Each course will likely be supplemented by an asynchronous, online component as well. If a faculty member is at a health risk, all of that instructor's synchronous classes may be moved to a distance modality. If we are again forced to move to a fully online modality as we did in the spring, the synchronous portion will continue via Zoom or a similar technology and the online component will already be in place. Certain courses may be shifted to fully online if it is determined that they cannot be delivered safely in a face-to-face manner.

Also, as part of the University's COVID-19 mitigation efforts, we will be adhering to a revised academic calendar, highlighted by the following:

- Aug. 10-16: Week of Welcome.
- Aug. 17: First day of fall semester classes.
- Oct. 26-Nov. 6: Registration for winter 2020 and spring 2021 classes.
- Nov. 20: Last day of fall semester classes.

- Nov. 21, 23-25: Final exams.

The University has also eliminated fall break in order to facilitate an earlier conclusion to the semester. Details regarding the December commencement ceremony will be announced at a later date. At present, there are no changes to the winter 2020 or spring 2021 academic calendars.

We are also working on various housing and dining plans that would involve fewer people on campus at any given time. Details on each will be forthcoming.

All of us at SRU are committed to academic excellence and the success of our students in whatever format we need to use. Our faculty and staff have been working to create remote learning environments that maintain rigor and deliver that “Rock Solid” education that our students have come to expect.

I know this situation has been difficult in a variety of ways. I am grateful to all of you for your willingness to do what has been necessary in order for our University to continue moving forward during this challenging time. We know that we are stronger together, and together we will navigate our way through these unprecedented circumstances.

Additional details about the fall semester will be announced as particulars are finalized.

Thank you for your patience and commitment to moving forward in a safe and healthy direction.

Be well.

William J. Behre, Ph.D.  
President