2020-21

CAMPUS

MAIZE & BLUEPRINT

ADVANCING U-M EXCELLENCE, PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY

Our guide to living, learning and working on campus together safely
To All Members of the U-M Community:

I am pleased to announce that the University of Michigan plans to offer a public health-informed in-residence semester this fall. It will consist of a mixture of in-person and remote classes structured to reflect our commitment to promoting public health while fulfilling our fundamental mission of transformative undergraduate, graduate and professional education.

Thanks to the thoughtful and deliberate efforts of hundreds of members of the U-M community, our cautious optimism about the fall has coalesced into a path forward. Their work has given me confidence that we can do this safely, and we will continue to plan and prepare in the months ahead. We now have the opportunity to begin a new journey together, equipped with the very best guidance and ideas from our leading scholars, innovative students and expert staff.

Because of the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, the semester ahead will look and feel different than anything we have seen before. But the pandemic won’t change our commitment to the members of our community.

Although not all courses will be available in every format, most students will be able to choose whether to return to Ann Arbor for a hybrid learning experience or study from home in a fully remote mode.

Our Ann Arbor campus will open its residence halls for housing and dining, and will offer many on-campus programs and activities that enhance the college experience. UM-Dearborn and UM-Flint have campus-specific plans for hybrid instruction that their chancellors will share with their communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been substantially contained in many parts of the country including Michigan. Nonetheless, the potential for new infections, whether students are at home or in residence, will continue throughout the coming academic year, and perhaps beyond, until a safe and effective vaccine is developed and administered widely, or a successful drug regimen is discovered. Our plan to conduct an in-person semester relies on basic public health strategies including social distancing, minimizing out-of-area travel, wearing face coverings, washing hands frequently, symptom screening, clinical testing, contact tracing and quarantine that add up to a highly effective way to limit spread of this illness, allowing students to pursue their Michigan education.

We will protect our students, faculty and staff with a broad array of research-based public health measures and tools. We will make full use of our longstanding excellence in teaching and learning, both in person and online, and tap our innovative spirit to deliver a world-class Michigan educational experience in these most unusual times. And we will ask all of you to join in prudent health and safety actions that will embody our commitment to caring for one another.

The primary components of our fall plan for the Ann Arbor campus are described below. We also have launched a Maize and Blueprint website with more information. It will be updated regularly as more details are finalized. Please note, however, that major changes in conditions could mean we have
to adjust parts of our plan. We will remain agile and ready to adapt as needed because we have seen how quickly circumstances can change.

In the meantime, all staff and faculty who can work from home should continue to do so, and our previously announced plan to gradually and carefully resume various campus activities will continue.

U-M’s public health-informed fall semester

**Instruction**

Students on the Ann Arbor campus will be able to choose from a full set of courses. Courses will be offered in formats that include in-person, remote and mixed instruction depending on curricular needs. We recognize that some students will choose or need to take all their classes remotely, and we’ll provide a robust set of fully remote classes that will enable most students to make that choice.

Decisions about which courses and sections to offer in which formats will be made by schools, colleges and departments to fulfill their unique educational needs. They will ground their decisions in our public health-informed guidelines, including the size of classroom spaces that are available, our ability to implement different health and safety measures described throughout this message, and the requirements of their pedagogy.

Generally, large classes will be held remotely, small classes will be held in person, and medium-size classes will be a hybrid of the two. This and other means can be used to diminish classroom density.

The Provost’s Office will work with schools and colleges on the application of these guidelines to help ensure academic program needs are met. We will also make other changes that reduce density in our classrooms and academic buildings. You can expect to see fewer seats filled and limitations on the use of gathering areas to preserve physical distancing, and we may limit building access to certain entrances and require Mcard swipes to enter buildings. Classrooms will be configured to provide physical distance for instructors, as well.

We will provide support for our public health-informed semester through several of our central resources for students or faculty, including our Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, Center for Academic Innovation, Services for Students with Disabilities, and Information and Technology Services. For faculty, this includes course design assistance and recommendations, workshops, help with creating instructional communities, and additional programs that support the quality of a U-M education.

We know that many faculty, staff and students have concerns about returning to in-person learning, teaching and work. We’re continuing to develop plans to protect vulnerable members of our community – and will encourage students and employees with high levels of risk to teach, learn and support
our mission remotely. Schools, colleges and units will work with individuals to every extent possible to address their concerns. We know that the pandemic has differential impacts on our communities.

In the weeks ahead, we’ll be able to provide further details at the central level and within our schools, colleges and departments.

**Academic calendar**

For the Ann Arbor campus, classes will begin Aug. 31, 2020, as previously scheduled, but fall break will be eliminated. The last day of in-person classes for the semester will be Friday, Nov. 20. After a nine-day-long Thanksgiving break, classes will resume remotely on Monday, Nov. 30 and continue until Dec. 8, with finals running Dec. 10-18. Our professional schools and colleges may have different calendars based on their programs’ requirements.

We will not hold a December Commencement ceremony this year, and graduates will be invited to participate in spring ceremonies as they normally are.

For the winter term, our plan is for classes to begin on Jan. 19, 2021, immediately after U-M’s traditional Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Symposium on Jan. 18. The later January start will give time for implementing any needed public health protocols before students return to campus, and we’ll eliminate spring break. Finals will run April 22-29.

These new semester calendars are designed to reduce the amount of back-and-forth travel for our students. Many of our peer institutions have taken similar steps with their calendars.

Our Dearborn and Flint campuses will adjust their academic calendars, as well.

**COVID-19 testing, monitoring and mitigation**

Our health and safety officials will continue to monitor the spread of the virus in our community and beyond. This extensive monitoring is already happening in real time and will continue as long as it is needed, allowing us to act promptly if conditions change.

In addition to the measures and tools mentioned above, U-M is finalizing plans and protocols for student, faculty and staff testing for infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. We also are building capacity for additional contact tracing.

Michigan Housing will set aside living spaces to quarantine and care for those with significant exposures to others diagnosed with COVID-19, as well, to isolate those diagnosed with this infection who cannot return home to
recuperate. Our University Health Service (UHS) began responding to COVID-19 well before it was declared a pandemic and will continue to provide outstanding care to our students. For any who might become seriously ill, our world-class health system, Michigan Medicine, is steps away and stands at the ready.

For faculty and staff, we are developing health screening tools to support self-monitoring and comply with any statewide executive orders that may be in effect. Our Environment, Health and Safety Department has been collaborating closely with campus units to help keep employees safe. As noted above, those who are at particular risk will be offered the option of teaching or working remotely if possible.

Universitywide, we are working to purchase more hand sanitizer, masks and other forms of personal protective equipment so that we can provide them as needed.

These and other measures will combine to form a "stackable" set of interwoven interventions that will enhance health and safety for all members of our community. What this means is that we will deploy multiple layers of safeguards simultaneously. Research demonstrates that stacking best practices together results in the optimal control of the spread of COVID-19. Our goal is to create an educational and workplace experience that is safe and accessible to all.

It will be imperative for all of us to monitor any symptoms we have and stay home if we’re sick. I also urge everyone – all students, faculty and staff – to get a flu shot, as seasonal influenza shares many symptoms with COVID-19, and flu vaccination will help to keep us healthy while also assisting our COVID-19 monitoring efforts. UHS and Michigan Medicine will make this available during the semester.

**Campus experience**

Student Life is engaging with hundreds of our students in preparation for the fall semester, and that work is ongoing. Housing and dining will be open for fall on our Ann Arbor campus, and we are taking a number of steps to provide a public health-informed campus experience for students living off-campus as well.

Most of our students live in communal settings, whether in our residence halls or in off-campus houses and apartments. Conceptually, these settings resemble "family units" – and all students will be encouraged to follow public health guidelines just as they would when living in their home communities. We are working with students to define a shared commitment that will promote the importance of acting to protect and care for one another and all members of the community.

Many of Student Life’s educational programs, community-building activities and learning experiences are being adapted to serve students during this challenging time. For instance, students have been able to participate in
initiatives that focus on community engagement and career skills this summer as many in-person internships and opportunities were canceled. Our public health experts are also advising us on how we may be able to offer Recreational Sports opportunities for students.

Many student-athletes have already returned to campus for voluntary conditioning activities under strict public health guidelines. Michigan Athletics is working with our public health experts and consulting with the Big Ten and NCAA on determining whether our student-athletes can safely return to competition this fall. An announcement will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead.

Students will also see additional changes to their campus experience such as physical distancing requirements in libraries and other common spaces and buildings, limited access to certain areas, additional cleaning, boxed meals and staggered timelines for activities such as move-in and dining. A group of our experts is examining potential safety changes for our bus system, as well.

Students planning to live in U-M Ann Arbor residence halls will receive more specific information from Michigan Housing in the weeks to come.

**We must have everyone’s help and commitment**

I know there will be many questions as we continue to prepare for the semester ahead. We’ll provide more details in the coming weeks, and all campus units will be working to implement our central guidelines based on their tailored local needs. There are few, if any, one-size-fits-all solutions at a university with our scale and breadth under such unusual circumstances.

As I ask for your continued resilience, I also must enlist your help.

We all face a test of our ability to live, study and work in a world where COVID-19 has not yet been tamed. The success of the upcoming semester will depend on all of us respecting the guidelines set forth by our experts and remaining mindful of the fact that each of us has the responsibility to be safe so we can protect our classmates, peers, teachers, mentors, colleagues and loved ones.

As students, faculty and staff at the nation’s top public research university, we have the opportunity to show the world that this can be done. At the same time, our "public" responsibility has never been more literal and important.

Everything we do has the potential to affect one another and the wider public, whether we are working to slow the spread of the virus or inspiring others to make our society better and healthier. I have every confidence that we will rise to this occasion, this singular moment in our history, to challenge the future and emerge, as always, as leaders and best.

There is no community I would rather be a part of as we begin this journey.

Sincerely,