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Coronavirus Update: May 8, 2020

Dear members of the Sacred Heart University community,

Wednesday, Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont came out with guidance for reopening colleges and universities. The good news is that the recommendations are in line with the discussions and planning that are already taking place among Sacred Heart's task forces that are preparing for the fall semester and beyond in the wake of the coronavirus. These recommendations include:

- A gradual reopening of the campus over the summer hopefully leading to a full reopening for the fall semester
 - Begin May 20 with research programs and some administrative functions
 - Reopen in early summer for workforce development programs that require onsite work, such as labs and clinicals. This particularly applies to students who were unable to complete requirements for the spring semesters
 - Allow undergraduate residential institutions to reopen at the end of summer for the fall semester—if prevailing health conditions allow

The governor's guidance was clear that certain health conditions must be met before these openings can take place. These are:

- The prevalence of the disease must be low enough to allow the safe resumption of campus operations
- Institutions that will be housing students 24/7 must have access to enough COVID-19 tests so that entering students, faculty and staff—even if asymptomatic—can be tested upon arrival and periodically throughout the semester
 - Anyone testing positive must be immediately isolated
- An adequate capacity for contact tracing must be provided to the higher education institutions

Colleges and universities will be required to file a reopening plan with the Connecticut Department of Health that will detail plans for repopulating campus, likely in phases; monitoring for infection; containing spread if infection is detected; and shutting down campus should it become necessary. As we stated above, Sacred Heart is already well prepared to begin a phased reopening in preparation for on-ground classes in the fall.

As we gear up for a full reopening, we have been procuring the necessary PPE supplies, including thousands of wipes, masks and gallons of hand sanitizer. The University is also working with its health partner—Orthopaedic Specialty Group—to procure its own tests and contact tracing capabilities. We are developing safety and cleaning protocols to limit the chance for an outbreak on campus, and finalizing plans to contain infection when and if that becomes necessary.

In the coming weeks, we will provide more information on our reopening plans.

We have made the decision not to hold summer camps on campus this year, and we expect that some—if not all—of our pre-fall programs will not take place. This is being done to allow the University to fully sanitize and prepare the campus for the start of the new academic year in the fall.

Some of you have asked about the timing of the refunds for rooms and meal plans. The team in the Office of Student Accounts appreciates your patience as the details regarding the previously announced housing and meal credit were finalized. Specific details will be shared under a separate email to all applicable students. If you do not receive the detailed update by Tuesday, May 12, you may contact the Office of Student Accounts at StudentAccountsOffice@sacredheart.edu for additional information.

We learned yesterday that Sacred Heart has been named a Tier 1 school by Educate to Career in its new ranking about college planning in the time of COVID-19. The ranking has four tiers. Sixteen Connecticut colleges were ranked, and SHU is one of three in Tier 1. Colleges in Tier 1 have these characteristics:

- A physical campus for in-classroom instruction should the health authorities allow colleges to open in September
- Robust software and systems to support distance learning programs
- Faculty experience in teaching online
- Reasonable tuitions & fees on a relative basis

We knew Sacred Heart was a leader in responding to the pandemic, but it's nice to have some outside validation.

Congratulations and good luck to all students who will have degrees [conferred](#) on them Saturday and Sunday. The ceremonies are at 10 a.m. Saturday for graduate students and 10 a.m. Sunday for undergraduates. There is also a [pinning and awards ceremony](#) for nursing graduates at 2 p.m. tomorrow. As we have said many times, we are working with the Class of 2020 leaders to plan an in-person graduation where we can all celebrate together as soon as it is legal to do so.

In closing, we want to wish a happy Mother's Day to all the moms among our students, faculty and staff as well as moms of our students. We hope you will enjoy our special [Mother's Day concert](#) on Sunday at 11 a.m. featuring the Timmy Maia Experience.

Have a great weekend!

The Coronavirus Planning Team

This message was sent to the following groups: !Campuswide-Students,!Campuswide-Employees