



A Message from Head of School Ben Williams

Dear Cate Families,

Yesterday I met with a small group of faculty and administrators tasked with assessing our January return to campus intentions and we concluded that in the interests of student health and community well-being we must adjust our plans. The current testing positivity rate in Santa Barbara County and the predictions of additional surges resulting from gatherings at Christmas and around the New Year make it unwise to ask students to travel amidst such contagion. We are also mindful of our responsibility in a time of great potential need in the County not to tax Cottage Hospital medical resources.

We intend, therefore, to begin virtual programming on Monday, January 18, a week later than originally scheduled. With Martin Luther King Jr. Day, our first community experience of 2021 will be a celebration of all that Dr. King stood for. It is hard to imagine a better way to launch the New Year.

Return to Campus

We will hold virtual classes beginning Tuesday, January 19th, and will offer evening meeting times for students living in an Asian time zone. We will then return students to campus on Saturday, January 23 (freshmen and sophomores) and Sunday, January 24 (juniors and seniors). The same expectations for testing still accrue. All students must have a negative test for COVID within seven days before returning to campus. As we noted in our previous communication linked here, students will be tested again during on-boarding and once again seven days after their return to campus. We intend to run virtual programming during the quarantine period while students are awaiting their second test result. Day students will come to campus to test with their class on either Saturday, January 23 or Sunday, January 24 and will remain at home undergoing their own quarantine while the boarders quarantine on campus. Day student testing will be scheduled in a separate mailing distributed at the beginning of January.

Winter Trimester

These adjustments will have other impacts. Mindful that virtual programming provides something less than an optimum educational experience and that some portion of our student body struggle to bring themselves fully to bear on their work in such an environment, we have minimized as much as

possible the duration of online delivery. To ensure that necessary momentum can be gained and whatever gaps from the virtual period can be filled in, we will hold six weeks of in-person classes before we complete the winter trimester and go on break. That means the trimester will end on Friday, March 12, two weeks later than we imagined when we built this year's calendar.

Spring Trimester

We are currently assessing impacts on the Spring trimester and will likely communicate our plans as those discussions reach maturity. At this point, though, we do not expect significant changes at the end of the school year. As we all know, planning ahead in a pandemic is a fraught exercise, but we are confident we have built in room for further contingencies or adjustments should they be necessary.

As for the adjustments that this letter will require in your planning, I am hopeful they are not significant. Should any family be unable to adjust travel plans or rebook tickets, we will be happy to have your students arrive on campus whenever they can get here. As we noted in preparation for this year, our dorms are open even when we are not in session. So students needing to arrive early on campus because of fixed plans can begin their quarantine whenever they get here.

We will be sending further communications on logistics and details in due course. This note is simply designed to inform your thinking and scheduling as we contemplate the travel ahead. I want to add, too, that our deliberations on these weighty matters have been informed throughout the year by our Medical Directors. Dr. Bob Gayou was instrumental in helping us plan for and navigate a healthy fall. Bob will continue to consult with us in the time to come, but he is stepping back from his responsibilities as Medical Director. Those tasks have been quite ably assumed by Dr. Susan Zapalac, who joined our team just this month and whose counsel has already been immensely helpful. Dr. Zapalac has served as an Attending Physician in the ER at Cottage Hospital since 2002 and most recently consulted at Santa Barbara Middle School.

I realize, of course, this is far too long a note to receive from a school on the eve of the holidays. So I will end with a simple thank you. It has been a great privilege to partner with all of you in a time of great constraint. May the holidays provide relief from such limitations and the future reveals itself to be as bright as we might imagine.

Servons,
Ben



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