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May 29, 2020

Dear Marywood Community,

On Friday afternoon, March 6, 2020, the last remaining students and faculty on campus left for Spring Break. It was far from anyone's mind that we would not return for the foreseeable future. Several days later, the administration was forced to pivot, a term we have come to use all too frequently, into an entirely new reality. The campus was closed to all students and all but mandatory staff. The faculty quickly converted face-to-face coursework to online learning. We thought the change was a temporary stopgap measure, and that we would return within a few weeks to the routine we had known in the recent past.

The reality evolved into a half-semester of online learning, the cancellation of every scheduled on-campus event for students, the community, and other organizations far into the summer, and the postponement of Commencement. Most student activities were held virtually, and other spontaneous celebrations demonstrated the creativity and commitment of so many members of the Marywood community from all sectors.

Weeks turned into months. The daily reporting of the devastation of COVID-19 inspired caution and even fear throughout the global community, and the question of a return to campus in the fall of 2020 was on the minds of everyone.

This communication from me is to inform you of what has transpired since then, what is happening this summer, and Marywood's plan for returning to campus life, as permitted by the Governor of Pennsylvania.

We are ready for every possibility. Understanding that we must proceed with a cautious, slow return to a full and active life on our beautiful campus, the following is a repository of what has happened and how we plan to move forward.

» **CARES ACT.** The March passing of the CARES Act by Congress and the Senate provided grants of slightly more than \$2 million, one-half of which was provided directly to eligible students facing specific financial challenges due to COVID-19 campus interruptions in areas such as meals, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and childcare. A student with additional expenses such as these can submit them for review by a committee established to administer any remaining funds. The second half was provided to the University to help with the cost of closing campus, moving instruction online, and other loss of revenue.

» **COMMENCEMENT: CLASS OF 2020.** Since social gathering in the arena will still not be possible on August 15, the originally communicated date change sent to graduates, we are planning to hold Commencement on campus on that date, keeping in mind all physical distancing requirements and safety regulations. We are determined to make it a great day for the Class of 2020. More details will be sent to all graduates as soon as they are finalized; if you are a member of this graduating class, please plan to be here with us for this unique and grand event. Also, Father Elston, our university chaplain, will livestream the Baccalaureate Liturgy from our beautiful Chapel on August 14 for graduates, their parents, families, and all the Marywood community.

» **REMOTE INSTRUCTION.** In mid-March, faculty who were not offering remote instruction at the time, were provided training immediately in order for them to be able to do so within the next ten days. I can neither thank them nor applaud them enough for their skilled response to an immediate need. While some faculty and students were, in many cases, not prepared for the reality that required this change, they adapted with grace and grit. Throughout the spring and into the summer, the faculty will be receiving additional training to assist them in preparing their coursework for the fall semester, the format of which is detailed below.

» **FALL 2020 SEMESTER PARAMETERS.** The Fall 2020 semester will begin as scheduled on Monday, August 24, 2020, and will end on Saturday, December 12, 2020. During the semester, we will observe current state guidance on occupancy limits, physical distancing, safety, hygiene, and related mitigation measures. Prior to Thanksgiving, students have options for their academic experience through **Marywood's HyBridge Education Model** (see below). However, all coursework, including finals, will be held *totally online between Thanksgiving and the end of the semester* (approximately a two-week period). When students leave campus for Thanksgiving Break, they will not return until the beginning of the spring semester in January 2021.

Marywood's HyBridge Education Model

Marywood's academic team has devised a distinctive, versatile approach to instruction: **Marywood's HyBridge Education Model**. This blended model of learning incorporates remote interactive and in-person individual instruction, both of which occur simultaneously. It is a flexible approach that both preserves the safety of students and faculty and delivers a high-quality educational experience. To provide a consistent learning experience for all students, all course content will be available online. However, students will have the option of choosing how they participate in class. Options include controlled, limited in-person settings that follow safety guidelines, remote instruction, or a combination of the two. This flexible approach allows students to build their own educational experience while preserving their safety.



Build Your Own Experience

ACADEMICS



HyBridge Education Model

A blended learning model, incorporating remote interactive and in-person personalized instruction, coupled with internships and clinical opportunities, safely delivering a high-quality education.



Enhanced Core

A flexible core curriculum designed to facilitate student choice and enhance professional studies, creating a fully integrated learning experience.

SUPPORT & SAFETY



Student Support

A full complement of reengineered academic, advising, and counseling services, coupled with athletics, social activities, service opportunities, and career counseling, enabling student success.



Campus Safety

A 115-acre suburban campus, located in a low-density residential neighborhood, ideal for physical distancing and small class sizes, putting safety first for our students.



» **RESIDENCE LIFE.** We have been working to determine the methodology for the re-entry of students into the residence halls for the 2020 fall semester. All residence halls will be sanitized according to ACHA (The American College Health Association) and CDC regulations over the summer. We have accounted for spacing and movement and have planned to offer primarily single room occupancy to all students until the rooms are filled. Typically, all freshmen and sophomores who reside beyond 50 miles of Marywood are required to live on campus. This requirement will be relaxed, if necessary, for sophomores for this year and only for this year. When rooms are filled, students interested in living on campus will be placed on a waiting list. Please understand that these temporary measures are being put into place to comply with best practices and government guidelines for safety. Once we are allowed to operate in an unrestricted manner, these measures will be adjusted. A survey/intent form will be sent via email to those students who lived on campus in spring 2020 and to commuter students who previously expressed interest in living on campus. Following that, additional information about residence life, signing up for rooms, consideration for graded reimbursement in the event of an altered schedule, and safety will be sent to all students requesting housing.

» **STUDENT ACTIVITIES.** The office dedicated to student activities has never stopped operations. Throughout the last several months, virtual events have been provided to our current students almost daily. Many have taken advantage of connecting to friends and classmates through these activities. As we move into the summer, Freshmen Orientation and several open houses will also be held virtually in a combination of informative, innovative, and imaginative ways, designed to offer an alternative yet effective method of reaching out to new and prospective students.

» **ATHLETICS.** Marywood belongs to the Atlantic East Conference. Our Director of Athletics and I have been in regular conversation with the conference. We have agreed that we will work together as a unit. The conference, following guidelines from the NCAA, will offer guidance to us regarding what sports will begin practice and play in a timeline that places an emphasis on the health and safety of our athletes. We recognize the frustration our coaches and athletes have experienced, but we are totally committed to returning to full play as soon as we are able to do so.

» **STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES.** Student Health Services is working in collaboration with local healthcare systems and public health officials to establish a surveillance plan to include screening, testing, treatment, contact tracing, and a University-wide response to confirmed cases of COVID-19. Our planned response includes the ability to quickly identify suspected or confirmed virus carriers and quarantine close contacts. Our office will continue to provide in-person and telehealth visits by appointment to ensure the health and safety of our students.

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» **ALUMNI EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES.** Alumni events, such as Alumni Weekend and the 50th Reunion of the Class of 1970, have all been postponed; some are in the process of being rescheduled, while others are transitioning to virtual opportunities for alumni to engage with Marywood. At some point, we will celebrate our alumni in a way that is fitting for all. We are ever grateful for the support and encouragement we have received from so many of our alumni during these past few months. Your prayers, words, and contributions were often just what we needed on any given day.

» **SPECIAL EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS.** I would like to extend my deep gratitude for your support of Giving Day 2020 in April. Your commitment, especially at this time, is inspiring. Most summer events scheduled to be held on campus have been canceled or postponed to another time. Our annual fundraiser, the Community Leadership Dinner, honoring the late Judge and Mrs. Richard Conaboy and their family, was postponed and is in the process of being rescheduled.

We at Marywood have not taken a “let’s wait and see” attitude about the future. Although our days are filled with ambiguity and the uncertainties everyone is facing in the midst of a global pandemic, we realize that we are changed as persons and that university life everywhere will be altered accordingly. That is why we are moving forward strategically with our plans for the near and distant future. Through the decades, Marywood has grown in the good times, and, in the not so good times, Marywood became stronger than ever because of the mission that guided her. Emboldened by a determined campus community, a proud alumni base, a dedicated Board of Trustees, unwavering benefactors and friends, and the IHM Sisters who lift us up by their dauntless spirit, we go forward. We invite you, along with our extended community, to come with us.

With hope for a bright future,



Sister Mary Persico, IHM, Ed.D.

» *If you have any questions or concerns about a specific area, please refer to our [COVID-19 Emergency Contacts List](#).*

