

RETURNING TO THE HILL

IMPORTANT UPDATES FOR McDANIEL STUDENTS

Prepared by the Return to the Hill Committee and Subcommittees, June 2020



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Dear McDaniel Students,

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our priority at McDaniel has been the safety and well-being of the members of our community. I'm writing to share with you a number of significant updates on our planning for fall 2020, including our new undergraduate academic calendar. Our decisions continue to be informed by the recommendations of the Return to the Hill committees, as well as guidance from state and county health officials.

You can review these important updates on our Return to the Hill webpage, available [here](#). We will continue to update the page with additional key decisions as they are made.

We look forward to welcoming you back to campus this fall even as we recognize that the coming year will look different than previous years. We continue to be guided by our First Principles and realize that our community's ability to successfully operate will require each of us to commit to the long-term health of our community that will necessitate short-term sacrifices of each of us.

Please stay well, and we look forward to seeing you soon back on the Hill!

Return to the Hill (RTTH) Committee

ACADEMIC CALENDAR CHANGES FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

The first way we are protecting the health of members of our community is to adjust the dates of our undergraduate academic calendar. This will remove the impact of holiday travel and avoid the start of peak flu season for the vast majority of students.

Therefore, most students will move on to campus between August 14-August 19 with classes for the fall semester beginning on August 20, 2020.

- Classes will be held on Labor Day.
- There will be no fall break in October.
- Classes will end on November 20, 2020 and the semester will conclude on November 24 following the exam period. No undergraduate instruction or exams will occur after Thanksgiving.
- The calendars for Graduate and Professional Studies will remain unchanged since all Graduate course instruction will be online for the fall. Fall Session I dates are August 24– October 18 and Fall Session II dates are October 19–December 13.

A full undergraduate academic calendar is available [here](#). Though the total number of instructional days for undergraduate students has been reduced, the number of class hours will be the same to ensure the quality of the academic experience.

SEMESTER MODEL CHANGE FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Embedded within our new academic calendar will be two 7-week academic sessions: Session A and Session B. Instead of taking all of your classes across the normal 15-week period, you will be taking half of your courses during Session A and half of your courses during Session B. Over the course of the semester, you will still be completing the same number of courses. For most students, this means you will be taking two courses in Session A and two courses in Session B. This change will help students manage multiple modes of instruction in a smaller number of classes while significantly decreasing the number of students you will interact with in classes over the course of the week.

Unfortunately, moving to a model that better protects your health as a student is likely to cause some disruption to your schedule as it may mean that classes in which you were currently enrolled may no longer work with your schedule. We apologize for this inconvenience. If you need assistance with modifying your schedule, your academic advisor, a faculty member in your major, or a member of the Academic Life team will be happy to work with you to revise your schedule. We expect all schedules will be completed no later than July 3rd and you will be notified as soon as your new schedule is available online.

MODES OF INSTRUCTION FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

There are two factors that will significantly affect the instructional model for the fall. The first is the need to provide safe, physical distancing protocols in the classroom, and the second is the reality that some of our students and faculty are unable to be physically present in the classroom due to age or other risk factors that make them more vulnerable to health complications connected to COVID-19. Given these factors, McDaniel will offer three types of classes:

Traditional in-person classes: As many of these classes will be offered as possible, but one of McDaniel's significant benefits under normal circumstances—small classrooms that only have a capacity for around 20 students—becomes a constraint in this environment where physical distancing is required, which requires reducing the capacity of those classrooms to about 50%. Space limitations due to physical distancing requirements mean the number of traditional in-person classes will be limited.

Hybrid classes: These classes are held partially in person and partially online. This enables professors to safely meet at least once a week with smaller groups of students from the same class in traditional sized classrooms. Most 1000-level classes will be held in this format. Our Information Technology Department is upgrading a number of our classrooms to support video conferencing to facilitate a high-quality hybrid learning experience.

Online classes: These classes are primarily online, but faculty may still hold optional in-person activities with students throughout the session to deepen and enrich the educational experience. The majority of classes at the 2000 level and above will be in this format.

All faculty who have not already been trained in online pedagogy are working hard this summer to redesign their classes to be highly engaging regardless of the modality.

We recognize that the modality in which your classes are offered may impact your decision to live on campus for the fall semester, and you will be notified of the modality on your revised schedule when it becomes available. We are committed to working with you on a decision that best meets your needs. Our hope is to return to our traditional mode of in-person instruction for the spring term, but, of course, we must adhere to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Carroll County Health Department as well as the Governor's orders for the state of Maryland. Those guidelines largely dictate what we are able to do in this regard.

FACILITIES AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE

NEW SAFETY MEASURES

Per Governor Hogan's orders, all members of the McDaniel College community—faculty, staff, students, visitors—will be required to wear facial coverings when inside buildings and residential common areas. We are fortunate to have a beautiful open-air campus and tents have been acquired that will expand our ability to utilize our outdoor spaces. Masks will not be required in outdoor spaces as long as physical distancing is maintained.

Additionally, students will be made aware of updated guidelines for cleaning and sanitizing classrooms, offices, and other campus facilities, as well as the coordination of traffic in and out of campus spaces. The college has already made a commitment to hire additional cleaning staff and cleaning and sanitation frequency will be increased. Updated protocols will be shared with our campus community over the coming weeks.

HOUSING

The College is pleased to welcome students back to residential life on campus, though this too will look and feel different. Students are able to reside in double rooms, though the college will not be utilizing triples or quads for student housing. We hope to accommodate any student who would like to live on campus, although

we recognize that students whose courses in both Session A and Session B of the fall semester are fully online may elect to defer residential living until the spring semester. When deciding whether you would still like to live on campus for the fall, please pay careful attention to the new policies that place significant restrictions on the residential experience. The draft of these policies is available [here](#).

We understand that these restrictions limit the freedoms students once enjoyed and we will be relaxing them as we are able per state and federal guidelines. At this time, however, it is critical to the health and safety that they are followed carefully. Given these new factors, all students who have already indicated that they plan to live on campus in the fall will receive a short survey asking them to confirm their housing preference by July 10th.

FOOD SERVICE

Campus dining will also undergo changes. State mandates for physical distancing mean that fewer students are able to be in the dining facilities at one time. This means that you will need to make greater use of take-out ordering, and will be introduced to a new app that will allow you to reserve a time at your preferred dining location. The new Hilltop Pub in the Student Center will also help us accommodate the physical distancing measures that need to be put in place. And, we will have additional options available to you for enjoying your meals in outdoor settings.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

COVID-19 testing protocols will be central to our return to campus and we are working in collaboration with the Carroll County Health Department, who has already agreed to partner with the college should any student test positive for COVID-19. The college has expanded our relationship with a local testing facility called LabCorp to offer testing on campus. In consultation with the college's Director of Risk Management/Environmental Health & Safety, the college is prepared to enact testing, contact tracing, and isolation protocols in conjunction with the Carroll County Health Department. Beds are being reserved for quarantining and isolating students in the event that becomes necessary.

Our Wellness Center is developing a separate location that will serve students seeking out counseling and mental health services, preventing them from interacting with students who might be visiting the Wellness Center because they are sick or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. We will also be offering additional tele-health capability beyond our normal campus services.

STUDENT SUPPORT

All of our student supports will still be available, either through in-person meetings or through Zoom conference calls. Although the modality may be changing for some office engagement in the short term, you will still have the same friendly connection you have always had to our wonderful staff in the Bursar Office, the Center for Experience and Opportunity, Financial Aid, Hoover Library, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Registrar, Student Accessibility & Support Services (SASS), Student Engagement, the Wellness Center and more.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND ATHLETICS

We understand the value of co-curricular involvement on campus through participation in clubs, organizations and athletics. The new academic schedule still includes a daily Activity Hour to give you time to engage in these pursuits. Though any form of community engagement will still need to abide by physical distancing and other health and safety guidelines, we plan for this vibrant aspect of campus life to continue.

Even as we await final decisions by the Centennial Conference related to conference competition, the Activity Hour will also provide all athletic teams opportunities for team activities, which may include team meetings, team social events, practices, and study halls. While all activities must follow the health and safety protocols in place, this will allow athletic teams to maintain what makes athletics at McDaniel so special—a team committed to athletic, personal and academic growth. The NCAA states that Division III athletics “place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants” and it is through this lens that all teams are committed to continuing the development of student-athletes.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The college plans to honor its commitment to students by absorbing over \$1 million in expenses on efforts related to health and safety to ensure the residential and academic experience is as safe as possible.

TUITION CHARGES

Tuition charges will not change for the 2020-2021 academic year. Regardless of instructional modality, we remain committed to the low faculty-student ratio that is a hallmark of a McDaniel education. Courses will continue to be taught by McDaniel faculty, and although the total number of instructional days has been reduced, the number of class hours will be the same to ensure the quality of the academic experience.

ROOM AND BOARD CHARGES

Room and board charges will not change for the 2020-2021 academic year although academic calendar changes have resulted in ten fewer days in the semester. Room and board will not be prorated.

To provide increased flexibility, all students on a McDaniel College meal plan will receive double the amount of McDaniel Bucks for the fall semester. McDaniel Bucks may be used on-campus, including at the Campus Store, and at select off-campus locations.

BILLING

To accommodate the needs of our students and families, McDaniel has made the following changes to our billing policies:

- The \$75 enrollment fee for McDaniel's 5-month payment plan will be waived for all families.
- Final payment deadlines have been changed as follows:
- For incoming students: from July 1st to August 1st
- For returning students: from July 15th to August 15th
- As long as payment plans are in good standing at the time of registration, no student participating in the payment plan will be prevented from registering for the spring semester due to an existing balance.
- No late fees will be issued for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- In partnership with the Bursar's Office, the Financial Aid staff will continue to offer one-on-one opportunities for students and their families to meet with their Financial Aid Specialist.

Students who are concerned about their ability to enroll at McDaniel due to financial circumstances may contact the [Financial Aid Office](#) or request additional funding by submitting the McDaniel College: Additional Financial Support Application, which can be found online in the My.McDaniel portal under “Student Menu”, “Student – Financial Aid”, “Funding Request Forms”.

We are excited to return to campus and will be ready to meet this moment with a shared promise to behave in ways that protect the health of each student, staff and faculty member. These are extraordinary times, and we are grateful for our community's resilience and commitment to keeping one another safe. As the summer progresses, we will provide you with more information and updates as they develop, including the opportunity to participate in a virtual information session for parents and students to hear directly from campus leadership and have their questions answered.

[Return to the Hill Committee](#)

