



Dear New and Returning Students,

6/10/2020

I am pleased to announce Loras' plans for the upcoming academic year, especially as it relates to navigating the implications of the ongoing pandemic. We are excited to share our "Loras Flex" plan below. It is beyond IMPORTANT that you read the ENTIRE message.

In addition, critical communications will be sent **next week that will require your response**. To that end, PLEASE be attentive and responsive!

Academic Calendar:

We will begin the new year earlier than scheduled. First year students will move in (as applicable) and begin a modified *Launch Into Loras* program on Sunday, August 23. Classes for all students will begin on Wednesday, August 26.

Labor Day Monday and Fall Free Days will become "class" days. The last day of in-person course delivery for the semester will be on Friday, November 20. Thanksgiving break will take place from November 23 - 27. The last week of classes will be offered exclusively remote (November 30 – December 4) and Final Exams will be conducted exclusively remote, too (December 7 – 10). Academic programs that have required in-person experiences (clinical, practicum, internship courses are examples) will continue in-person after Thanksgiving, unless remote options exist.

January-Term will be eliminated for this academic year and replaced by a May-Term. To that end, our spring semester will begin on Monday, January 11 for all students. Easter Break will take place from April 2 – 5. The last day of spring semester classes will be April 16. Final exams will take place from April 19 – 22. The Baccalaureate Liturgy/Commencement ceremony will take place on April 24, 2021.

May-Term will begin on May 3 and conclude on May 21, 2021. Incoming first year students will be required to complete the May-Term.

Academic Delivery:

Instruction will be based on a modified HyFlex (Loras Flex) teaching model that provides a combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities that can accommodate students who are present on campus, as well as those who wish to pursue their education completely online. It also allows for a seamless transition to completely online teaching and learning should the need arise for an individual at any point in the semester.

As is typically the case, instructors will use eLearn for delivery of course content that includes facts and ideas and can be accessed at any time. Providing students with a greater proportion of course content online allows more time for in-class discussion and engagement with the instructor on the course material that students typically find most challenging. Students living on campus or commuting students will join the class in-person on some days and remotely on others for synchronous instruction that occurs during the scheduled class time. Students who are taking classes completely online will also join these synchronous instructional sessions.

Social distancing in academic spaces will be achieved through a combination of reduced classroom capacities and staggered start and end times for classes. The reduced number of students in the physical classrooms will allow for a minimum of 6 feet of social distancing. Students will continue to have the benefit of a high faculty-to-student ratio that provides plenty of engagement with Loras faculty.

Residence Life:

The Loras College Residence Life staff is excited to welcome students back to the campus housing community again this fall. Things will look a little different on campus as the health and well-being of our campus community is extremely important.

Safety measures include expanded housing check-in times. The custodial staff will provide additional regular facility cleaning and sanitation efforts to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in our community. Inside housing facilities, individuals will be expected to wear masks in shared community areas, practice social distancing, and follow additional safety precautions recommended in the guidance from our Health Center.

Returning students who have signed up for housing will have their current residence housing selection honored. The total number of students living in Beckman and Rohlman Hall will be reduced to provide additional social distancing and limit the number of individuals sharing common restrooms, shower rooms, and kitchens. In some instances, residence life has placed students in single rooms so that density targets can be achieved.

Food Service:

Campus Dining has implemented a number of changes to best serve students while simultaneously following CDC guidelines. These changes include:

- New “meal” stations that offer more options in order to reduce movement across stations.
- Extended hours in the cafeteria alongside recommended dining times in order to ensure all have access while also staying under maximum capacity limits.
- All Campus Dining staff will have temperature checks prior to starting work and all staff will be required to wear masks while working.
- Directional and social distancing signage will be placed in all campus dining locations. Seating has been redesigned in dining areas to ensure social distancing and minimize the size of any one dining group.
- A “quick eats” option for meals “on-the-go” will be offered, as well.
- Touchless payment options for all students at all locations are being planned.

Health and Safety:

Loras College is committed to the safety and well-being of all students, faculty, staff and visitors. We have adopted a number of proactive preparedness measures and are working closely with local, state and national health officials.

We are blessed to reside in a community where we have strong local health and medical care providers. MercyOne and Unity Point Finley Hospitals are partnering with Loras College, Clarke University and the University of Dubuque as we plan to re-open our respective campuses this fall. Their willingness to lend expertise and services gives us a greater sense of comfort as we develop our safety guidelines, access testing, and provide care for our students, staff and faculty.

Loras expects all members to take responsibility to help limit the spread of the virus whenever possible. Individuals must be mindful of their behaviors at all times to maintain their own health and safety and that of others. Take care of your physical and mental health by getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, drinking water and exercising. When returning to campus, campus community members should expect to wear a mask, social distance and clean frequently touched items and surfaces. The daily routine should include rigorous handwashing, respiratory etiquette and self-monitoring for symptoms/fever. Individuals who are ill or concerned should isolate and seek assistance.

The Health Center, Counseling Center, Spiritual Life Office, and local healthcare providers are here to help, please contact them before stopping by.

Family Financial Challenges:

As noted, Loras plans to continue to provide a quality educational experience through this very complex, but quite flexible educational delivery approach. I would like to remind families who have experienced significant financial impact, that our Board of Regents has created an emergency aid fund in order to support students in starting or continuing their education.

Financial Planning colleagues are reaching out to those students who have already let us know of financial disruption, but if you did not respond to my initial request, please contact the Financial Planning Office directly and discuss how your financial circumstances have changed.

Your Next Steps:

Next week, you will be asked how you choose to attend Loras this fall (e.g., residential, commute to campus from home, fully online). Students who live off campus and commute will be given the option to sign-up for campus food service.

Please be attentive and responsive to e-mail. We will better serve you to the extent you make us aware of your plans.

My colleagues and I are looking forward to a new academic year even as it will be vastly different from previous years. Your flexibility and willingness to join in shared personal responsibility are appreciated in advance.

We believe Loras Flex is a creative and accommodating way to proceed given the varying needs and desires of our campus community, but within the appropriate health boundaries related to the overarching pandemic.

Visit www.loras.edu/flex for more information.

God Bless,

James E. Collins '84
President
Loras College