

**To:** Montgomery College Community

**From:** Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard, President

**Subject:** **MC Operational Decisions for Summer and Fall 2021**

**Date:** February 25, 2021

As you know, the College has been deliberate about its decisions regarding campus operations, carefully guided by the advice of our Coronavirus Advisory Team (CAT) in consultation with the county health director's office, and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The College currently finds itself facing another set of operational decisions: planning for summer and fall classes.

As we have all experienced, different streams of information about vaccine availability—federal, state, and local—have created confusion. Some have posited much earlier dates for vaccine delivery and distribution than others, resulting in frustration and anxiety. What seems clear, though, is that distribution of vaccines locally is dependent upon supply, which is currently insufficient. The most recent public data indicate that 13 percent of Montgomery County residents have received the first dose of a vaccine and only six percent have received two doses.

### **Plans for the Summer**

With the health and safety of our students and employees at the top of our priority list, the College plans to offer 2021 summer session classes in remote format (our current status) or distance learning format. As most of you know, remote classes are scheduled on specific days and at specific times with "REMOTE" listed as the location in the course schedule. Students meet as a class remotely through Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate at the scheduled times. There will be some exceptions for a few classes, which rely heavily on hands-on experiences. Faculty and staff will continue with their existing remote work schedules unless otherwise notified by their supervisors.

### **Plans for the Fall**

Because of the high level of uncertainty surrounding multiple health metrics, the College plans to start the fall semester with classes in remote format (our current status) and distance learning format. Faculty and staff will continue with their existing remote work schedules unless otherwise notified by their supervisors. A selection of hands-on learning experiences and lab courses will be held face-to-face. Because of the complexity of class scheduling, student registration, and financial aid processing, and assignment of faculty to thousands of class sections, the College must make operational decisions earlier than some other institutions.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2021, the College will track a list of metrics, which MC's Coronavirus Advisory Team (CAT) has identified as safety markers, including:

- COVID-19 infections in Montgomery County, specifically, new confirmed cases per 100,000 by county metrics
- Percentage of Montgomery County residents fully vaccinated by county metrics
- Test positivity rate in Montgomery County by county metrics
- MC's case tracking and outbreak data measured by MC's Public Safety Office
- Adequate labor and materials for cleaning and disinfecting as determined by the College per CDC guidelines
- Sufficient preparation of MC campuses/buildings/facilities as determined by the College per CDC guidelines
- On-site compliance with behavioral protocols as reported to MC's Public Safety Office
- MC emergency response planning and teams' operational capacity

These [Return to Campus Metrics](#) are posted on the health and safety page of the College's Coronavirus section will be updated weekly. They will be compared to a matrix of risk levels designed by the CAT. The result will provide College leadership with a framework through which to assess the safety of face-to-face working, learning, and teaching on our campuses and worksites. Given the existence of new strains of the virus, additional metrics could be added if they become relevant to health and safety conditions.

The format in which a class begins—remote, face-to face, or distance learning—will remain constant throughout the fall semester. If conditions improve, a class will not transition from one format to another in the middle of the semester, in order to minimize disruption. Should the metrics improve substantially, some additional fall classes, beginning in the second half of the fall semester (that is, October 27) may be offered face-to-face. Classes that rely most heavily on face-to-face instruction will be given priority for face-to-face scheduling. Worsening of health conditions, however, could move a face-to-face experience to emergency remote status.

<b>If you begin the semester enrolled in a:</b>	<b>and if conditions improve the class:</b>	<b>but if conditions worsen the class:</b>
Remote class*	<b>will remain</b> remote	<b>will remain</b> remote
On-campus class	<b>will remain</b> on-campus	<b>may convert</b> to remote
Online class	<b>will remain</b> online	<b>will remain</b> online
Lab (see class schedule)	<b>may be campus based</b>	<b>may convert from campus-based</b>

*\*Selected classes may have a campus-based experience if conditions allow*

## Following the Metrics

Since the [metrics](#) identified can change quickly, they will be updated weekly on the MC health and safety page. This resource will be explored in our upcoming Conversation with Leadership, our virtual town hall meeting. This event is a good opportunity to digest the details about these decisions, ask questions, and even propose alternatives. I encourage your participation: please submit questions to [ResilientMC@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:ResilientMC@montgomerycollege.edu). The event will air on Thursday, March 4.

I realize that there is a lot of emotion involved in any decisions that the College makes about its next steps. People may react with relief or consternation—or ambivalence—to a decision on this matter. Our journey through COVID continues to be one that is fraught with powerful emotions that we all experience about protecting ourselves and our loved ones, and continuing to serve students and our community. The College will always retain the right to further constrain or cancel face-to-face learning or other activities in progress should conditions worsen at any point.

## Evolving Conditions

The next phase of our experience will likely involve *more* ambiguity, not less. There may continue to be conflicting external reports about vaccine availability and distribution, so we should remind ourselves to absorb such information in the context of the dynamic environment in which it is produced. Contradictory information from media sources about local and national conditions will likely be a continuing reality. While this can be very frustrating, please be assured that the College will never make decisions about health and

safety without thorough consultation with the CAT, local and state health authorities, our human resources team, and in compliance with CDC guidance.

We are considering a pilot return to buildings during this spring semester with several, small-scale uses of space, for example, one computer lab on each campus, or a small number of space rentals. The specifics of such decisions will be communicated clearly to the College and the community in advance. We will continue to communicate thoroughly and in a timely fashion so that important questions are clarified and personal planning can be accomplished. Montgomery College continues to prioritize the health and safety of its students and employees as we continue fulfill our mission.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our students and community.