

## **USM Institutions Plan a Fall Semester of Hybrid In-Person and Remote Instruction**

### ***Federal, State, and Local COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines Will Inform All Aspects of Campus Preparations***

**Baltimore, Md. (May 29, 2020)** – University System of Maryland (USM) institutions will welcome students back to campus this fall in a hybrid fashion, combining at least some on-campus, in-person instruction with remote learning.

Over the next two weeks, each USM institution will announce an overview of its initial planning for the fall 2020 semester. Each campus plan will follow general guidelines and critical factors determined by the Return to Campus Advisory Group appointed by USM Chancellor Jay A. Perman in April—including federal, state, and local public health guidance.

The Return to Campus Advisory Group is composed of university-based leaders who have assembled their own cross-campus committees of experts in various campus functions. Guidelines from the advisory group identified what conditions must exist for students to return to campus, and helped each institution move toward decisions advancing safer living and learning environments. Changes in COVID-19 disease spread and its public health impact will continue to inform the group's planning.

"I'm grateful for the thoughtful guidance the advisory group continues to provide," Perman said. "I've said many times that USM institutions are incredibly diverse. Having university-based leaders on this group who understand that diversity—who can drill down into the implications of what each return-to-campus decision means for each university—is essential to good planning. The group's insights have been critical as we approach the fall 2020 semester in the safest and most practical way possible."

### **Developing Institutional Plans**

Each campus will identify specific decision points as they develop timelines for the start and end of the fall semester. For example, some student cohorts—such as those majoring in certain health professions—will begin the semester as early as July. However, most students enrolled at residential universities will begin the semester in mid- to late August. Some institutions will end in-person instruction by Thanksgiving, while others—depending on local health conditions—may complete the term at the traditional time.

Other decision points will include the number of residential students versus remote students at each institution; whether, when, and how athletics may resume; and guidelines governing other campus events.

All institutions are taking steps to reduce the density of students in campus housing, decreasing room occupancy to the extent possible. Most universities are prohibiting or limiting the use of community spaces in residence halls, such as kitchens and lounges. Universities are modifying food service options to lower density in dining halls and achieve physical distancing. For instance, several universities will offer students grab-and-go meals.

The health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community is paramount to fall semester planning at each USM institution. Additionally, all USM campuses are determined to ensure quality and equity in

students' learning experience, with the understanding that their students will be learning in different ways and in different environments.

For example, some studio, laboratory, and clinical classes will be offered in person, but at each institution, a certain number of lecture and other courses will be taught entirely online. Some sections of the same course could be taught both in person and online, based on the institution's mix of residential versus remote students. As laboratory research continues at universities, there will be an emphasis on maintaining physical distance in those labs and properly disinfecting them.

All USM institutions have made the decision to postpone study abroad programs through the fall semester.

"Chancellor Perman and the members of his advisory group understand the difficulty of these fall planning decisions. We know how important it is to best serve our students, faculty, and staff, with the highest emphasis on maintaining safety," USM Board of Regents Chair Linda Gooden said. "The pandemic presents obstacles being felt throughout higher education. Our universities are committed to offering the best academic experience possible for our students, while maintaining health and well-being throughout the system."

Return-to-campus plans include projections and assumptions that will become more certain with time and with our capacity to provide adequate safety measures. Campus plans will be flexible enough to change as circumstances change across campus functions. Some USM universities already deliver a sizeable portion of their courses online, and the plans of those institutions will reflect their unique considerations.

### **An Emphasis on Health and Safety**

Each university will comply with federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and will have in place certain critical safeguards, including the ability to:

- Obtain necessary PPE, testing kits, and other materials.
- Assess and monitor potential COVID-19 symptoms among students, faculty, and staff.
- Assist students, faculty, and staff with securing COVID-19 testing and treatment.
- Isolate residential students who contract the disease and quarantine those who are exposed to it.
- Coordinate contact tracing in conjunction with local health departments.
- Reduce density on campus, and enforce physical distancing in classrooms, residence halls, and dining halls.
- Clean campus buildings thoroughly and frequently, with an emphasis on high-touch surfaces.
- Continually review the effectiveness of these and other safety measures.

The USM is in the early planning stages for resuming research operations, and is developing a rigorous set of protocols that must be maintained for laboratories to reopen. Those protocols are expected to inform the safety and disease surveillance practices universities implement when welcoming students back to campus this fall.

Each USM university will determine how to accommodate students, faculty, and staff who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 and who choose not to return to campus.

USM is one of the largest employers in Maryland and a primary driver of the state's economic recovery. As USM institutions plan a safe and phased transition to in-person instruction, consideration will also be given to innovating campus operations and helping Maryland achieve its sustainability and greenhouse gas reduction targets.

USM institutions vary in their student populations, size, type, and location, and must be responsive to their local orders, guidelines, and conditions. Therefore, each campus will have different considerations in determining how it might accomplish in-person instruction. Individual campus plans will reflect this diversity. In a system as large as the USM, implementation of the fall plan must have enough flexibility for each institution to address its unique needs and best serve its community.

*The USM comprises 12 institutions: Bowie State University; Coppin State University; Frostburg State University; Salisbury University; Towson University; the University of Baltimore; the University of Maryland, Baltimore; the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science; the University of Maryland, College Park; the University of Maryland Eastern Shore; and the University of Maryland Global Campus. The USM also includes three regional centers—the Universities at Shady Grove, the University System of Maryland at Hagerstown, and the University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland—at which USM universities offer upper-division undergraduate and graduate courses.*

*Systemwide, student enrollment exceeds 172,000. The USM and its institutions compete successfully nearly \$1.5 billion in external grants and contracts annually. USM institutions and programs are among the nation's best in quality and value according to several national rankings. To learn more about the University System of Maryland, visit [www.usmd.edu](http://www.usmd.edu).*

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