



Our Way Forward: Fall 2020 Update

1 message

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To: broadcast-all@gg.wfu.edu

Dear Wake Forest community,

Our mission to open the doors of opportunity, seek truth and cultivate a community of people of good character and mutual support has never been more important, and perhaps has never been more deeply challenged. The communities in which we live are under great stress, as we cope with the pandemic, an economic recession and painful reminders that we, as a country, have repeatedly failed to live up to our ideals.

Wake Forest must continue to stand as a place of hope, supporting our community members, especially those most vulnerable among us. I remain ever grateful for how you have served one another and our greater community. You have shown compassion, flexibility, unwavering patience and steadfast goodwill in the face of the unknown. Your commitment as faculty, staff and students has proven that our mission is worth every effort to sustain.

Our Vision for the Fall

As previously shared, it is our intent -- and our earnest daily work -- to reopen Wake Forest's campus with confidence this fall. **We will announce our full plans for how we intend to do so by June 30.** Significant planning and preparation remains before details are finalized; however, thanks to the exceptional work of multiple planning groups, I am able to share several insights into our current thinking. First, I would like to draw your attention to a new website, ourwayforward.wfu.edu, where you can follow the planning process, see updates as they become available and submit ideas to help us build a fall semester that exhibits the character and will of the Wake Forest community.

Insights into the Fall Academic Calendar

Planning teams of faculty and staff have evaluated several options for the fall calendar. This work is driven by our dual commitment to protecting the health and safety of our community and sustaining a vibrant learning and living environment.

On-campus undergraduate courses will begin on August 26 and run through November 24. Students will return home for Thanksgiving and not return to campus until the start of the spring term. Concluding academic activity, including final exams, will be conducted remotely from November 30 to December 18. The Law School will have a slightly different schedule, beginning classes on August 17 and concluding all on-campus activity by November 24. Any other slight deviations to graduate and professional school calendars will be communicated by degree program leaders. We also anticipate forgoing a fall break this year; Reynolda Campus students and faculty will be asked to limit travel outside the local area in accordance with forthcoming guidelines to help preserve the health of our community.

Innovation in Course Design

Wake Forest is consistently ranked among the top universities for teaching because of the commitment our faculty make to providing the best learning outcomes for each student. True to form, we are determined to make this fall academic experience as dynamic and engaging as usual. We have invested in faculty development programs, and over the course of the summer, our faculty will participate in peer-to-peer learning communities to prepare and share innovative pedagogies.

Recognizing that everyone may not be able to physically return to campus, we are preparing our course design to

include face-to-face, blended and online classes. Teaching will use technology where necessary and where it enables students to engage more fully in the academic experience, depending on disciplinary and pedagogical best practices and public health guidelines.

The fall course schedule, including updated information about course modalities, will be finalized by July 15. The Office of the University Registrar, faculty advisors or relevant graduate academic service areas will contact students to provide information about updated registration processes before this date. Undergraduate students will be able to build or adjust their fall schedules, taking into account our new, rich mix of offerings. Graduate and professional school students can expect some additional options for course access as well. Academic advisors will guide students through the process as in typical years.

Educating the Whole Person

While a strength of the Wake Forest experience is the deep connection among students and between students and faculty, we will have to learn to make these connections in new ways. Modifications to our signature undergraduate residential experience and some new approaches to our extracurricular activities will be needed to account for health and safety requirements.

Housing

The health and safety of our community remains our top priority. We are working closely with public health experts to review the possible configurations of our residential communities and to offer off-campus housing options. We expect to outline our plan for University housing by June 30, including any necessary and temporary revisions to the University's three-year undergraduate residency requirement. The Office of Residence Life and Housing will contact new and current undergraduates soon thereafter with additional information regarding the on-campus application process and related housing options.

Dining

We will offer a revised and flexible set of dining options, including enhanced take-away service and delivery offering, while self-serve buffet-style meals will likely not be possible. Our focus on sustainable ingredients, nutrition and performance will continue to be a mainstay of our program. We successfully managed this approach with a limited number of students in the spring and plan to scale those functions for the fall. We anticipate that all of our retail and residential dining offerings will be available to our campus community with added locations to address distancing and capacity expectations that comply with public health guidelines. The number of people allowed in the common spaces of the Pit, Benson Food Court and North Dining Hall will be managed appropriately.

Recreational Sports and Activities

We anticipate that the Wellbeing Center will be open with appropriate distancing measures and increased infection control measures to enhance safety. We expect to offer intramural sports activities which are low health risk, and we will pursue creative new options for friendly competitions among our students. We will also work with student leaders to create a robust offering of outdoor activities on and close to campus to enjoy North Carolina's lovely fall weather.

Lectures and Club Activities

We expect a vibrant campus this fall with numerous ways for students and faculty to engage their minds and spirits. A planning team is devising a special schedule for the semester, using our beautiful campus as a backdrop for many outdoor events, public performances and art that work within the public health guidelines for indoor gatherings and social distancing.

Investing in the Health of the Community

Public Health

We trust that each community member will understand that measures will need to be taken to keep one another healthy. One lesson of the pandemic is that individual actions are interconnected. Our ability to sustain a viable fall semester will depend on each of us doing our part.

We will communicate the health, safety and hygiene expectations necessary to create a successful semester before students arrive on campus. We do not anticipate pre-screening COVID-19 testing of all individuals coming to campus, as national public health guidelines no longer support that as an effective strategy. We will provide education and seek your support on such practices as:

- Wearing face coverings to limit infection and disease spread;
- Maintaining social distancing to minimize infection and disease spread;
- Vigilance in personal hygiene (hand hygiene, avoid touching your face and eyes, and cough/sneeze etiquette);
- Participating actively in self-reported daily symptom screening and of staying at home when you are sick or may have been exposed to COVID-19; and
- Following guidelines on travel, indoor gatherings and isolation requirements.

We know that this semester is going to be different, but we believe that together we can create an engaging and fulfilling living and learning experience. We will be tracking key metrics for our community that will provide data on COVID-19 activity and use this data to inform the public health response. If all do their part, we will be able to minimize disruptions caused by COVID-19 outbreaks and keep the semester on track.

Student Physical and Mental Health Services

Wake Forest is investing in the most effective health management technology and training to prepare for varying circumstances. Our academic medical center will provide testing strategies and protocols, care for the sick and expertise from nationally renowned epidemiologists. Faculty, staff and students will have the option to participate in clinical studies that will advance our knowledge about managing this pandemic and draw on latest research to improve community health.

Additionally, we will expand our capacity in the student health center to provide patients the broad medical support traditionally available. Mental health services available through the University Counseling Center and psychiatric services in the Student Health Service will remain accessible to those in need.

Supporting the Demon Deacons

Student-athletes are voluntarily training remotely and staying connected with their coaching staffs and teammates. The NCAA approved the return to campus for student athletes effective June 1. Wake Forest is moving cautiously, keeping the health of our student-athletes and coaching staffs our top priority.

On June 8, we welcomed back to campus a very small group of student-athletes who are rehabilitating from injuries so that they can access our state-of-the-art sports medicine equipment and training staff. They will be joined by another limited group later in June with additional groups returning in July, consistent with approved reentry procedures for campus.

The ACC and NCAA remain in discussions about the parameters for competitions and schedules. Updates will be forthcoming.

Our Way Forward

As you can see, there is much to consider about how we will approach the fall semester. I encourage you to visit ourwayforward.wfu.edu to understand the ongoing planning process and to submit your insights and ideas for a successful fall.

It is my commitment that we will do the work -- with care and critical thought -- that will result in the best possible experience for our community. Thank you for supporting Wake Forest and helping us navigate these challenging circumstances. I am grateful to be working alongside you as we take these steps forward together.

More than anything, I want to see our campus and spaces filled with life and learning. Our calling to provide opportunity and pursue knowledge for the benefit of society will go on, and we will meet the challenges of the day together, as one community, dedicated to the principles of openness, respect, honor, friendship and integrity.

Please continue to stay healthy and safe.

With gratitude,

Nathan O. Hatch
President