



August 3, 2020

To the Stevens Community:

I write to the campus community today with an update on Stevens' Fall 2020 reopening plans, a change of course necessitated by a number of key factors:

- Increasing rates of COVID-19 infection in New Jersey, particularly among those between the ages of 18 and 29;
- Challenges associated with quarantining students for 14 days who are from the 36 states/jurisdictions affected by Governor Murphy's travel advisory;
- Increased levels of discomfort of our faculty and staff with returning to campus, as measured by an anonymous pulse survey administered late last week: 73% of faculty and 44% of staff reported being uncomfortable returning to campus;
- Increasing numbers of faculty and staff who have been granted an accommodation because they or a family member are immunocompromised or at high risk for COVID-19 or who expect to experience child care issues due to K-12 school circumstances;
- Updated information on the percentages of undergraduate and graduate students on their preferences for a fully online learning experience: 15% of new first-year and transfer undergraduate students have selected a fully-online option while 32% and 36% of returning undergraduates and graduate students, respectively, have chosen fully online learning;
- Formal and informal input received from individual members of our community and from key groups, including the Academic Council, members of the Faculty Senate and faculty representatives of the Joint Faculty Senate – Administration Campus Reopening Committee, the Student Government Association, and the Graduate Student Council, as well as the Board of Trustees; and
- Preliminary feedback from medical and other experts from Hackensack Meridian Health's Reopening America program.

Based on all these inputs and with the goal of further reducing the density of the campus population, we have made the decision that only first-year students, new transfer students, and new graduate students will have the opportunity for an on-campus learning experience this fall. This mode will include a mix of in-person, socially-distanced hybrid learning and online instruction. All other students will continue to pursue their education online.

Returning students who work on campus supporting Residence Life, classroom-based teaching and related activities, and in research labs, including Ph.D. students, will also be provided access to campus and must abide by all health and safety requirements.

It is important to note that certain types of instruction are currently allowed in Stage 2 of New Jersey's Restart Plan: labs, clinical rotations, technical, and hands-on instruction. Lecture classes, even socially-distant classes, will not be allowed until New Jersey enters Stage 3 of its Restart Plan. The timing of New Jersey's transition to Stage 3 will depend on infection rates in New Jersey and other factors considered by Governor Murphy and the New Jersey Department of Health. A final fall semester schedule will be available later in August, prior to the start of the semester. Additional questions about instruction should be sent to fallsched@stevens.edu.

Where possible and consistent with the health and safety protocols described in the university's reopening plan and subject to State of New Jersey guidance, research may continue on campus. All research that can be done remotely should continue in that mode. Additional details will follow from the Vice Provost for Research and Innovation.

This decision was, without a doubt, among the most difficult and consequential that I and many members of our leadership team have made in our entire careers. We have approached this challenge in a consultative, collegial, and objective manner, and with the best interests of our university community in mind. We considered a range of options and variations on those options and ultimately arrived at this approach. In addition to considering and respecting the concerns and sentiments of our faculty and staff, the wishes of our students to return to campus, and evolving health conditions and new guidance, our priority has been the health and well-being of all members of our university community.

This decision may help to address the concerns of some members of our campus community about returning to campus, since greatly reducing the number of students on campus also lessens the demand for classrooms and increases opportunities for testing and other efforts to limit the spread of infection. However, we also realize that it may not go far enough for others. Those colleagues who remain uncomfortable returning to campus and who have not previously received an accommodation should contact their Dean or their respective Vice President or his or her designee to discuss a satisfactory solution.

Importantly, we also know that this decision will disappoint the returning undergraduate and graduate students who had opted for an on-campus experience. Our faculty have been preparing and will work hard to make the online learning experience the best it can be, and the four Deans and faculty are planning additional efforts to connect with students during the fall semester.

This decision is effective for the Fall 2020 semester only. We are hopeful that we will be able to invite all students back to campus soon, and we will revisit this decision for the Winter Intersession and the Spring 2021 semester later this fall.

On-campus housing will be limited to first-year and transfer students who have opted to take hybrid/flex classes and who are not taking classes exclusively online for the Fall 2020 semester. Housing applications will be withdrawn for upper-class students who had planned to be on


campus and who must now study online. Students experiencing housing insecurity or other exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case by case basis; those students should email Assistant Vice President Dr. Sara Klein. More information from the Office of Residential and Dining Services will be sent directly to students impacted by this change on Tuesday, August 4th. Additional questions should be sent to rds@stevens.edu.

The Stevens [Return to Campus website](#) will be updated with these changes.

I do understand that there remain questions about various aspects of our campus reopening plans. I want to assure our university community that we take these issues very seriously and continue to consider input and new information as we further refine these plans. We will provide updates, informed by the experts at Hackensack Meridian Health and authoritative agencies, as soon as they are available.

Lastly, I want to extend my deepest appreciation for the colleagues who are working selflessly and tirelessly seven days a week to research, develop, refine, revise, implement, and answer many questions about our plans for the fall—in addition to the work they continue to do as part of their normal responsibilities. With their incredible efforts and the sincere and cooperative engagement of all faculty, staff, and students, I have every confidence that we will pull together to overcome the challenges we are currently facing.

Per aspera ad astra,


Nariman Farvardin
President