



Bryant University

To: Bryant University faculty, staff, students, undergraduate families, and alumni

Date: June 11, 2020

Regarding: Fall Reopening Plans

I am excited to be on campus this week, another step in my transition toward assuming the presidency on July 1st. My initial focus, during these first three weeks, will be on a healthy and safe fall re-opening of the campus, and continuance of Bryant's strong educational programs and mission as we respond to the global pandemic. These early days will also allow me the opportunity to get better acquainted with all of you, to listen and learn about Bryant, and to consider how we can make our community even stronger going forward.

In response to the global pandemic, the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff is our top priority as we prepare for the start of the 2020-21 academic year. I am writing to update you on:

- Our fall reopening plans
- A modified academic calendar for the fall semester
- Campus protocols and testing for COVID-19
- New Winter Session opportunities for our students

Bryant has worked hard to earn a growing reputation for academic excellence, and I am eager to build on that excellence in the face of unprecedented circumstances. As many of you know, President Machtley and I have worked together closely to ensure a strong transition of Bryant University leadership on July 1. I would like to thank President Machtley once again for his assistance in this regard.

I know that my first year as president will present challenges and learning opportunities for all of us. Bryant's pristine campus, secured entrance, location and moderate size, and culture of concern for the community are key assets that will serve us well. Yet, there are significant uncertainties associated with the coronavirus outbreak and its impact on higher education. We know that more information about the virus, its contagion and containment practices, and testing capabilities and protocols will be available over time. This makes contingency planning and organizational agility especially important. Through the hard work and commitment of so many in our

community, Bryant has demonstrated a strong ability to innovate and adapt to student, society, and market needs. I am optimistic that, with all of us working together, we can address these challenges and ensure the continuing success of this outstanding institution.

Teams Preparing Reopening Plans

We have spent considerable time over the past months consulting with healthcare experts and with six Bryant committees (comprised of over 50 Bryant faculty and staff) working on interdependent aspects of our fall reopening. These committees include Health & Safety; Academic Programs & Technological Support; Student Life & Support; Athletics & Recreation; Facilities, Staff & Budgets; and Communications. Each team member remains ever mindful of the importance of maintaining the most essential elements of the unique educational experience Bryant provides in terms of instruction, residential life, student success programs, inclusive excellence, and extra-curricular activities. All these elements are critical to fulfilling our mission of educating, preparing, developing, and supporting students for personal and professional success. In addition, committee work has given priority to sustaining the collegial employment experience for which the University has been recognized as a great place to work.

We are in the final stages of developing plans that will be submitted to the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) for its review, feedback, and comments. The top priority of our collective efforts in this planning is to ensure a safe and healthy environment for every member of our community. Reopening the campus and bringing students back early, allowing for completion of the fall semester before Thanksgiving, will substantially advance this objective.

In alignment with plans Governor Raimondo announced yesterday for the reopening of all schools in Rhode Island in August, and with the planning of our peer colleges and universities in the state, Bryant's campus-based student residential experience and instruction will commence in August. This will allow all students to finish their fall academic work and complete final examinations before the Thanksgiving break. Returning to campus after the break would pose a significant risk due to the associated travel and extensive personal contacts. This plan will mitigate any potential spread due to a fall COVID-19 resurgence.

Fall 2020 Schedule

Based on the current available understanding of COVID-19 and the associated government recommendations, the fall semester schedule is planned as follows:

- August 4: Some varsity athletes, staff and coaches return to campus
- August 5: International students return to campus and begin mandatory quarantine
- August 19: **First-year students arrive on campus**
- Aug 23-24: **Sophomores, juniors and seniors arrive on campus**

- August 25: **Classes start for all students** (simultaneous in-person and interactive lecture capture, see more detail below)

- Nov 13: Classes end
- Nov 14-24: Final examinations

- Nov 24: **All finals complete, semester concludes, students depart campus**

- Dec 10: Grades submission deadline

The advantages of a phased reopening for the fall semester include:

1. Allowing students to arrive in a staggered manner, rather than during one weekend, will allow time for the students to adjust to changes on campus.
2. Enabling first-year students to have an on-campus orientation and receive the special attention they deserve as incoming students. It also will make socialization into a residential academic environment more manageable for our first-year students, especially since residential life will be more complex with the implementation of public health-related practices.
3. Ensuring all fall semester requirements related to instructional hours are met, and personalized interaction with faculty and staff maintained, while addressing health and safety concerns.

COVID-19 Testing

Appropriate and effective testing is essential to the safety of our community and the effectiveness of our efforts as an institution of higher learning. We are taking steps to ensure that timely, high quality, on-campus testing for COVID-19 can be conducted and overseen by our health services staff; this includes the acquisition of PCR testing

equipment and expansion of our health services staffing. This will enable expeditious turn-around and accurate test results while avoiding potentially long waits as demand for testing in the community increases during any potential surge in COVID-19. The PCR testing equipment Bryant will deploy has been used successfully by major hospital systems (including Lifespan in RI) and other organizations domestically and internationally. In Singapore and Hong Kong, this testing, along with social distancing and other health protection strategies, helped achieve comparatively low infection rates. Bryant expects to begin testing when the equipment arrives in July. We also are pursuing a partnership with a nearby testing facility to further enhance adequate and timely testing capacity. Detailed information on testing will be provided to the community and updated on a regular basis.

Our current plan is to test all symptomatic Bryant community members and conduct random testing of representative samples of the campus population. In addition, beginning on June 15, to help ensure that infected individuals do not come onto campus, all faculty, staff, students, and visitors will use the Bryant Health Checker App, or its equivalent, to complete daily attestations regarding any COVID-19 related symptoms and body temperature.

Campus Protocols

Throughout our summer reopening and fall semester, all faculty, staff, students, and visitors will be required to adhere to strict physical distancing practices and to wear a facemask while on campus in accordance with campus guidelines. All classrooms, residence halls, and community spaces will be cleaned with appropriate disinfectant on a frequent basis. Our plans for heightened cleaning include using electrostatic sprayers to clean classrooms multiple times each day, cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces on a four to six hour rotation, and equipping custodial services staff with machines that provide higher level disinfection of all bathroom surfaces. Wherever possible, Plexiglass shields will be installed in high-traffic locations (e.g., at the post office, library, bursar's office, etc.) to help prevent direct contact between individuals. Out-of-class activities will be strictly regulated to ensure compliance with all health and safety requirements, including physical distancing. These include varsity athletics, intramural sports, concerts, stage performances, and student engagement activities. In the event of a positive case on campus, we will complete a case investigation, contact tracing, and provide appropriately staffed isolation and quarantine facilities.

Faculty, staff, and students with immune deficiencies are encouraged to remain off campus. Faculty and staff, depending on their individual situation and role on campus, will be presented, when possible, with options for continuation of their work.

All class sessions will be available on campus, via live streaming, and/or recorded for later viewing by lecture capture. To ensure appropriate physical distancing within the classrooms, some class attendance will be split between alternating sessions. The Deans and the faculty are working on the development of appropriate pedagogical practices to meet health and safety guidelines. A significant investment in additional classroom technology will ensure remote connectivity and build on Bryant's well-known progressive teaching practices. The Provost and I will share additional information by early July, including information about support for faculty and students as they prepare for different modalities of course delivery and access in the fall semester.

Winter Session Opportunities

The period from Thanksgiving through January 25, between the fall and spring semesters, will allow students to take one or two courses specifically designed for effective, condensed, and remote delivery. We plan to offer two sessions during this break: December 3-22 and January 3-22. This will give students the opportunity to accelerate degree completion and even take an extra course or two to expand their learning and interests.

In Closing

The top priorities in our planning for the fall semester are to ensure the health and safety of students, faculty and staff; to continue the high quality Bryant education and student life experience; to listen and learn on important issues including those related to inclusion and social justice; and to sustain our positive employment experience.

To achieve a successful and effective response to the global pandemic; by securing testing capacity, enhancing academic technology, and implementing facilities and operations redesign will require Bryant to incur additional unplanned expenditures. It is important to note that these unplanned but necessary expenditures will not be passed on as additional costs or fees for our students and their families.

As the summer progresses, we will give priority to communications. By July 1st there will be a COVID-19 microsite serving as a centralized repository and information hub, an email hotline and eNewsletter established, and there will be interactive communication platforms and other vehicles for inclusion and social justice listening

learning and engagement. These platforms will enable timely communication and the sharing of important information and perspectives.

The contributions of our dedicated faculty and staff, and their commitment to students and to Bryant, remains extraordinary and will help all of us through this challenging time in American higher education and for our nation and for Bryant University.

Thank you all for your strong commitment and contributions to Bryant. Please remain safe and healthy. We are in this together and all stronger and better for that.

Sincerely,

Ross Gittell, Ph.D.
Incoming President