



REOPENING **MERCY,** PART TWO

2020-2021





August 5, 2020

Dear Mercy families,

As we prepare for the 2020-21 school year, we are mindful of the ever-changing circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. This September, we begin our 60th anniversary year with a laser focus on the academic success, health and safety, social and emotional well-being, and spiritual growth of each Mercy Girl. As such, we are sharing “Mercy Reopening, Part Two,” which will further outline our plans for the year.



Throughout the summer, the COVID-19 Response Team and the Leadership Team have continually stayed alert to guidance from state and local authorities, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as the approaches considered by other area independent schools. To guide us through this uniquely challenging year, Mercy High School has prepared four distinct models that reflect the innovative tradition of the Sisters of Mercy: ***Mercy Online 3.0***, ***Mercy PACE***, ***Mercy Hybrid***, and ***Mercy 60***. Each model carefully considers local and regional public health indicators, the ability of our students, faculty, and staff to shift quickly as the external environment changes, and how we can provide an experience marked by excellence for our Mercy families. As such, each model is ***prudent, flexible, and robust***.

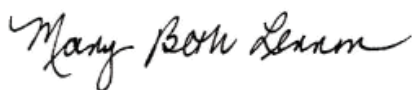


- ***Mercy Online 3.0*** expands on our remote efforts from this past spring, by providing vigorous academic instruction alongside virtual student life activities.
- ***Mercy PACE*** employs many of the same instructional features of ***Mercy Online 3.0***, but also allows for carefully monitored in-person activities that support the online classroom experience such as Big Sister-Little Sister events, assemblies, and orientations for each year level.
- ***Mercy Hybrid*** allows for Mercy Girls to alternate between in-person and online instruction. In this model, longer class periods are scheduled to limit movement on campus while ensuring depth of pedagogy and inquiry.
- ***Mercy 60*** permits a full return to in-person academic and community programming.

We will announce our opening model for the 2020-21 school year in mid-August. We are deeply committed to honoring each family's investment in a Mercy education in every stage that we may implement this year. In addition to delivering our core mission of an excellent, Catholic, Mercy education, we believe deeply that community is an integral aspect of our school's unique culture, and is critical to the socio-emotional health of our Mercy Girls during this pandemic, which necessarily separates us.

In addition to outlining our instructional models, this report also provides information regarding staffing, technology upgrades to facilitate continuity of instruction, new health and safety protocols, and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

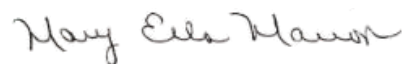
We thank you for your prayers, unwavering support, and partnership in a Mercy education for your daughter. We look forward to a 60th anniversary year that will showcase the strength, resilience, and excellence of our community and our beloved Mercy Girls.



Mary Beth Lennon '85
President



Jeanne A. Blakeslee
Principal



Mary Ella Marion '76, P'09
Dean of Students



Catherine McAuley
Founder of the Sisters of Mercy

"No virtue is perfect without
prudence."

Catherine McAuley

"Prudence comes from the Latin 'pro'
and 'videre': to see or look forward "

Sister Patricia Smith, RSM, PhD

Former Chair of the Mercy High
School Board of Trustees

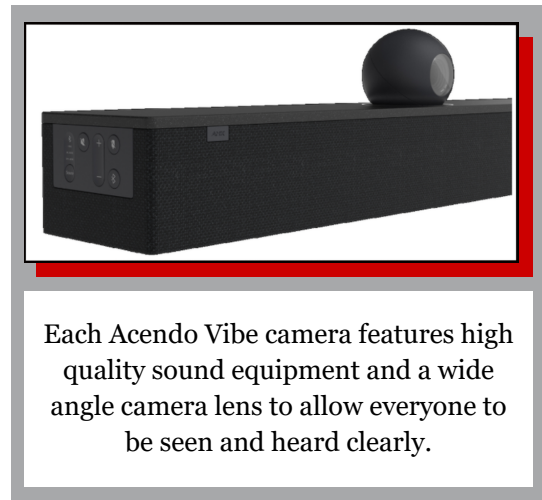


PLANNING *for* 2020-2021

Introduction

Since May 2020, our COVID-19 Response Team has been planning for the 2020-21 academic year at Mercy High School. Every aspect of school life has been carefully considered. Significant investments in intensive professional development for faculty and staff, the appointment of additionally highly qualified personnel, and the acquisition of technology to support multiple instructional models have been made. These include:

- Faculty and staff professional development around online instruction, disciplinary content, and equity and inclusion,
- Addition of four professional positions: Acting Assistant Principal; Academic Dean and Director of Continuous Learning; School Counselor; and Registered Nurse,
- Purchase of 32 LENOVO laptops and 35 AMX Acendo Vibe cameras featuring stereo speakers, wide range microphones, and high-definition images, all for instructional purposes,
- Installation of updated servers and hardware to improve network reliability, and
- Creation of a new wireless and segmented network that guarantees faculty a higher broadband speed during periods of high usage.



Informed by multiple factors, Mercy proposes an approach to this year that is ***prudent, flexible, and robust***. During this challenging time, our academic models will ensure continuous excellent instruction aimed at forging relationships while sustaining and strengthening Mercy students and families. A key feature is providing personal attention to each Mercy Girl and supporting Mercy's active community life and rich school spirit in each stage.

Spring and Summer 2020

Mercy's online learning program for Spring 2020—online instruction and nearly all campus activities suspended with the exception of graduation—was termed ***Mercy Online 2.0***. This model allowed for limited short visits inside campus buildings for locker clean out by seniors. Any other short visits to campus by students for the dropping off of school materials or picking up of items took place in the school parking lot. A successful graduation for 76 students and 180 guests and staff demonstrated how Mercy could manage socially distanced gatherings outside for shorter periods of time in carefully monitored settings and with much planning and direction. Throughout the spring and summer, staff who have been able to telework have done so. We have continued to carefully monitor the number of employees on campus.



CONTINUITY *of* LEARNING

Mercy High School has created four distinct academic models that will guide us through this unprecedented year. Allowing flexibility to move between stages, as indicators and circumstances warrant within the Baltimore region, every model preserves Advisory, Seminar, and Magic Time, hallmarks of the Mercy Magic. The decision to move from stage to stage will be determined by the Board of Trustees with the input of our COVID-19 Response Team and our Public Health Resource Group, and will be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Stage	Academic Model	Model Details
Stage 1	<i>Mercy Online 3.0</i>	Fully online with very limited campus activity
Stage 2	<i>Mercy PACE</i>	Online academics with select on-campus activities
Stage 3	<i>Mercy Hybrid</i>	Reconvening academics with socially distant classroom spaces and online and on-campus community life activities
Stage 4	<i>Mercy 60</i>	Full on-campus instruction with a flourishing on-campus community life



Stage 1: Mercy Online 3.0 (Fully Online)

This model, introduced in spring 2020 and enhanced over the summer through teacher professional development, appointments of additional academic staff, investments in technology, and an updated schedule, offers each student an experience that includes excellent interactive classroom instruction together with virtual experiences that support the health, socio-emotional well-being, and spirituality of each Mercy Girl. Seminar topics will include skill development, health and wellness, cultural competence, leadership, and college planning. A rich community life ties students together and combats the isolation our adolescent girls are experiencing due to social distancing and limited social activities.

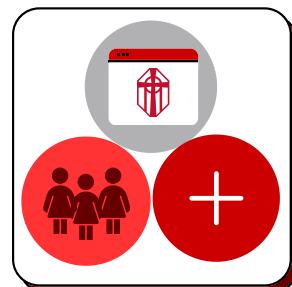
Mercy Online 3.0					
Time	Day I	Day II	Wednesday	Day III	Day IV
8:30 a.m.	Daily Check-in and Announcements				
8:45 a.m.-9:45 a.m.	A 13	E 13	Seminar 1	A 24	E 24
10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.	B 13	F 13	Seminar 2	B 24	F 24
11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	C 13	G 13	Seminar 3	C 24	G 24
12:15 p.m.-1:00 p.m.	Lunch				
1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.	D 13	H 13	Seminar 4	D 24	H 24
2:15 p.m.-3:15 p.m.	Magic Time		Faculty Meetings	Magic Time	
Magic Time Schedule: Monday -Advisory with coordinated plans Tuesday -Sophomore and Senior Seminar; Department Meetings Wednesday -Faculty Meetings Thursday and Friday -Steering Committees, Class Meetings, Assemblies, and other student-centered activities					

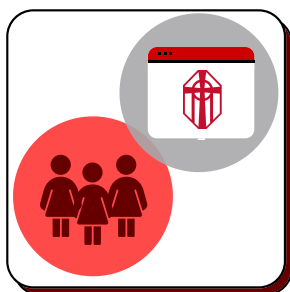
Stage 2: Mercy PACE (Personal and Creative Experiences)

With many of the same instructional features of ***Mercy Online 3.0***, including the above schedule, ***Mercy PACE*** allows for an opportunity to bring to campus small numbers of students under carefully monitored circumstances for community-building events and student support that augment online classroom learning.

Depending on the external environment, this might include in-person orientation programs and first days of class for each year level, Big Sister-Little Sister activities, assemblies, service activities, and prayer services.

Mercy PACE activities will utilize our large indoor spaces, including the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Auditorium, and outdoor spaces, which allow students to socially distance and which have been shown to reduce the likelihood of virus transmission.





Stage 3: Mercy Hybrid (In-person and Online Instruction)

Mercy Hybrid will allow, perhaps gradually, about half of our students to return to campus at the same time. To ensure social distancing, classrooms have been reconfigured to accommodate 12–14 students. All students are assigned to Group One or Group Two, with sisters assigned to the same group. In this stage, students alternate between in-person and online classroom attendance on Garnet and Gold Days. Purple Days are completely virtual. Students will attend class on campus two days each week, and will have a total of three weekly touch-points with each teacher. On Garnet and Gold Days, four class patterns will meet, 75 minutes each in length. This ensures depth of coverage and a mix of pedagogy and inquiry. On Purple Days, all class patterns are scheduled. Purple Days are designed for resource, extra help, and meetings with teachers. Advanced Placement classes may hold synchronous virtual classes on Purple Days.

Stage 4: Mercy 60 (Fully In-person)

As we celebrate our 60th anniversary with the start of the 2020-21 school year, we look forward to returning to in-person academic and community life programming! The three models outlined above build to a smooth reentry into in-person school and pre-pandemic community life.



STAFFING *updates*

We are meeting the challenges of the pandemic with additional appointments of forward-thinking, highly qualified personnel to support our Mercy Girls. We are pleased to share these updates with you.

Acting Assistant Principal



Since joining the Mercy faculty seven years ago, **Ms. Kathryn Burke Adelsberger** has taken on important leadership roles, including coordinating our Association of Independent Maryland and DC Schools accreditation self-study, leading the authorization process for the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IB MYP), chairing our social studies department, and serving as freshman class co-coordinator. She will continue to serve as the IB MYP coordinator. A cum laude graduate of Fordham University with degrees in history and French, Ms. Adelsberger studied in France as an undergraduate. She holds master's degrees from Fordham (in teaching) and from Loyola University Maryland (in educational leadership). She is currently enrolled in Fordham's doctoral program in educational leadership, administration, and policy.

Academic Dean & Director of Continuous Learning

Mercy's first-ever Academic Dean and Director of Continuous Learning, **Ms. Abby Schindler** is responsible for ensuring that students and teachers have the training and tools for success in both on-campus and online learning environments. Ms. Schindler's broad experience at Mercy includes leading the feasibility study for the IB Diploma Programme, chairing the world languages department, and serving as the senior class co-coordinator. Ms. Schindler received her B.A. in Spanish from Wellesley College where she was a member of the Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Honor Society, won the Cervantes Prize in Spanish, and received the Eastern College Athletic Conference Scholar-Athlete Award. Ms. Schindler also holds a Master of Education degree in curriculum and instruction with a concentration in leadership from Loyola University Maryland. Previously, Ms. Schindler taught and coached at the Pomfret School, Hampton Roads Academy, and Mercersburg Academy, all highly regarded independent schools.



School Counselor

Ms. Kristan Jester will join the Student Services Team, assisting with college counseling and working alongside counselors to support the socioemotional health of our Mercy Girls. She is a certified school counselor and holds a B.A. in psychology (cum laude) from Loyola University Maryland and a Master of Arts and Master of Education in psychological counseling from Teachers College, Columbia University. Ms. Jester had been at the Institute of Notre Dame for the past six years, where she worked as a school counselor. Last year, she became director of IND's college counseling program. A graduate of The Seton Keough High School, she worked at her alma mater as the testing and resource center coordinator.

Nurse

Ms. Mary Rizzi-Ayd, RN joins the Mercy community as our new school nurse. Ms. Rizzi-Ayd comes to Mercy from the Institute of Notre Dame. Before her tenure at IND, Ms. Rizzi-Ayd served as the nurse at Saint Ursula School for seven years. Ms. Rizzi-Ayd holds a B.A. in English literature with a minor in secondary education from Loyola University Maryland and taught middle school English in Southeast Baltimore County before attending Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, where she earned her BSN. Ms. Rizzi-Ayd has more than 25 years of nursing experience and has practiced nursing in the fields of Med/Surg, Outpatient Surgical, GI, Vascular, Utilization Review and Oncology.

Additional Staffing Information

Ms. Peggy Carey is joining the Mercy faculty from the Institute of Notre Dame, where she was the science department chair and site coordinator for Project Lead the Way Biomedical Science. She has taught a range of science classes from biology and chemistry to Advanced Placement Environmental Science, Space Science, and Multimedia Design. Prior to IND, Ms. Carey taught at Immokalee High School in Florida, Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, and Roland Park and Pimlico middle schools. Ms. Carey holds a bachelor's degree in secondary education and a master's degree in education from Towson University. A graduate of The Seton Keough High School, Ms. Carey has a deep understanding of the unique culture of Catholic girls schools.

Ms. Liana Casbarro will join Mercy's English Department, where her responsibilities will include teaching and moderating "The Shield" and "The Lance." For several years, Ms. Casbarro taught English at Kenwood High School (an IB World School), where she designed an innovative curriculum and fostered a classroom culture of empathy; she also became an advanced academics facilitator, helping other teachers identify students who could transition to AP and IB courses. Ms. Casbarro has a B.S. in communications and an M.S. in human resource development from Florida International University. She also holds a Master of Arts in leadership in teaching from Notre Dame of Maryland University.

Dr. Lorraine Cuddeback-Gedeon will serve as our director of mission and ministry and teach religious studies. She was an assistant professor at Mount St. Mary's University for the last two years. She is experienced in community-based learning and social justice pedagogy, having worked for the Ignatian Solidarity Network, the Justice Education department at Saint Mary's College, and the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana. Dr. Cuddeback-Gedeon earned her B.A. in theology and writing from Loyola University Maryland before attending Notre Dame, where she earned an M.Div. and Ph.D. in Christian Ethics.

Ms. Lisa Maly will join our world languages department, teaching Spanish. Ms. Maly comes to Mercy from Calvert Hall College High School where she taught for the last eleven years. She also recently served as the sophomore class moderator. She also taught at The Seton Keough High School for several years, and is excited to return to a girls' school. Ms. Maly also spent a year teaching abroad, at Instituto Irlandés de Monterrey in Monterrey, Mexico. She holds a B.A. in history and Spanish and an M.S. in Global Analysis from Towson University, and has travelled extensively throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

Mr. Ghani David Raines joins the Mercy community as the chair of our social studies department and director of our Law and Social Action Program. Most recently, he served as a social studies teacher and director of equity and inclusion at the Institute of Notre Dame. He also served on IND's Academic Council, conducted professional development workshops for faculty, coordinated curriculum mapping, and evaluated teacher performance. Prior to IND while working at Friends School, Mr. Raines taught upper school history, and he was deeply involved in the 21st Century Teaching and Learning Committee, the Discipline Committee, Model United Nations, and work in all aspects of diversity. He has also taught upper school history at St. Paul's School, and he directed a summer program at Gilman. Mr. Raines hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the College of William and Mary.

Mr. Shai Levin, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Goucher College, will teach chemistry and Project Lead the Way Biomedical Science. Mr. Levin completed graduate work in Notre Dame of Maryland University's School of Pharmacy and is currently enrolled in McDaniel College's graduate liberal arts program. At the Shoshana S. Cardin Community High School, Mr. Levin taught chemistry, physics, and American history, moderated debate, served on the tech crew for student productions, and ran the scoreboard for home games. Previously, Mr. Levin worked as a teaching assistant and stockroom manager in Goucher's chemistry department (where he was named Employee of the Year), as well as at Towson University and LifeBridge Health.



Welcome to the Magic of Mercy!

Ms. Diane Powe Webbert joins Mercy's social studies department from the Institute of Notre Dame where she taught U.S. government and world history and created and directed the dance program there. Previously, she had taught at St. Paul's School for Girls for 15 years. At IND, she chaired the arts department, served as lead advisor for the sophomore class, organized the Junior/Senior Prom, and served on the faculty diversity committee. Ms. Webbert holds a bachelor's degree in political science and performing arts from Notre Dame of Maryland University, where she was inducted into Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society, and named to Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities. Ms. Webbert also studied abroad at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom.

TECHNOLOGY *upgrades*

To facilitate continuity of instruction, Mercy High School has completed several technology upgrades around campus. For faculty, 32 LENOVO laptops have been purchased to facilitate instruction in every model. Additionally, 35 state-of-the-art AMX Acendo Vibe cameras featuring stereo speakers, wide range microphones, and high-definition images have been procured to allow for flexibility within instruction. We have also installed updated servers and hardware to improve network liability, and created a new wireless and segmented network that guarantees a higher broadband speed during high periods of usage.

STUDENT *Life*

Athletics

The Fall 2020 sports season is still under consideration by the Interscholastic Athletic Association of Maryland (IAAM) and subject to guidance and directives from state and local government. We will provide updates as they become available via Mercy High School's website.

Field Trips

At this time, all field trips are cancelled. Teachers may plan virtual field trips for their classes, clubs, or special programs.

Emmaus Days

More information about these annual prayer and spiritual class-wide experiences will be shared with students and families as the school year proceeds.



Clubs and Activities

Clubs and activities will resume meeting in-person in the ***Mercy Hybrid*** model. Otherwise, these important activities will be conducted virtually.

Dress Code

When in class, whether in-person or online, Mercy Girls will wear their uniforms and adhere to the policies of Mercy High School's dress code, including appropriate hair color. In the ***Mercy Hybrid*** model, on those days that a Mercy Girl has Physical and Health Education scheduled, she should wear her gym uniform.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Protocols

The following health and safety protocols reflect the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This section contains the many measures that Mercy High School has taken over the summer to prepare for a return to campus. It is critical for the well-being of our community that each family reviews the COVID-19 daily self monitoring, out-of-state travel advisory, and social distancing and mask protocols with their daughters.

COVID-19 Daily Self-Monitoring

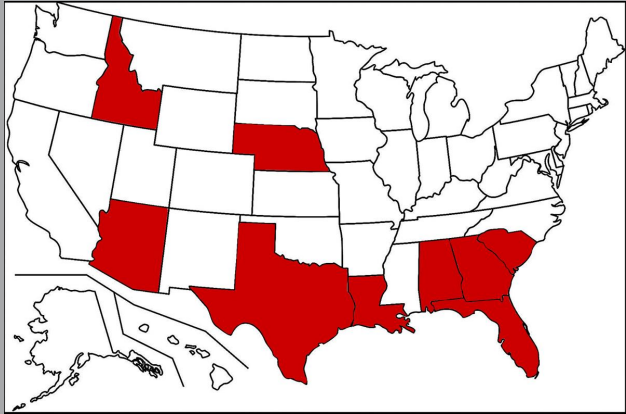
Students, faculty, and staff must complete a daily symptom questionnaire every morning before coming to campus. More detail will be forthcoming about this process. Anyone who experiences a new onset of cough or shortness of breath will not be permitted on campus. If an individual is experiencing two or more of the following symptoms, they will not be permitted on campus. These symptoms include:

- A fever of 100.4 or higher
- Chills
- Shivering
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Loss of sense of taste or smell
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea)

Anyone experiencing any of these symptoms should contact their health care provider for further instructions.

Reporting and Contact Tracing

In the case of a positive COVID-19 test within our community, Mercy High School will work with the Baltimore City Health Department to perform outreach and contact tracing. This may result in faculty, staff, and students being quarantined. As Health Department guidelines evolve, our processes will be quickly adjusted.



These states were mentioned in Governor Hogan's address on July 29. Mercy families should monitor data for any changes prior to traveling.

Out-of-State Travel Advisory

Governor Larry Hogan announced a public health advisory regarding out-of-state travel on July 29. Under this advisory, all Marylanders are urged not to travel to states with a positivity rate above 10%. As data continues to change, Mercy families, faculty, and staff should monitor data provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention before arranging out-of-state travel. Anyone who has traveled to these areas must get tested for exposure to COVID-19 and must self-quarantine while awaiting results before participating in any activities on campus.

Mask Protocol

All students, faculty, and staff must wear masks at all times inside campus buildings. Employees in single occupancy offices may remove their masks while alone. If social distancing cannot be maintained, masks are also required outdoors. Fabric or re-usable masks must be laundered before they are re-used. For students, masks must be either plain paper fiber or plain cloth masks that are black, white, red, or gray. Masks may not have any symbol, picture, or lettering beyond a Mercy logo.

Social Distancing

Every member of the community must maintain a six foot distance as feasible on campus. Classrooms have been organized with this protocol.



Classrooms have been rearranged to allow for six feet of social distancing.



In the first floor lobby, desks have been placed six feet from one another, creating a study area for Mercy Girls.

Increased Cleaning Schedule

When students are on campus, we are instituting a robust daily cleaning schedule, which includes disinfecting all key areas of campus, including those items that are frequently touched/trafficked. Each evening, the campus will be deep-cleaned. Hand-sanitizer stations have been installed throughout the campus. When on campus, students and faculty members will clean each used area at the end of each classroom session. Wipes in each classroom and public spaces will be provided for this purpose.



Creating two health rooms will allow for Mercy Girls to receive care during the school day more effectively for their needs.

Health Room

The health room will be staffed by a full-time registered nurse. The facility has undergone renovation and enhancement. There are two adjacent locations, one for ill students and one for those who need minor assistance related to their well-being. There is an isolation area for anyone presenting with possible COVID-19 symptoms. Any individual who becomes sick or feels sick during the day must report to the health room immediately.

Lunch

Students must bring their own ready-to-eat lunch, which will be consumed in the fourth period classroom. No vending machines or microwaves will be available.

Visitor Policy

Campus access will be limited to faculty, staff, students, and essential guests (deliveries, repair technicians, and other service vendors, etc.). All visitors are required to wear a mask while on campus. Parents should contact the reception desk for any specific needs during the school day.

Lockers and Locker Rooms

Students will not be assigned lockers, and locker rooms will not be in use, both to maintain social distancing and to reduce time in public spaces.

HVAC System Protocols

Our HVAC system allows us to maximize air flow and quality throughout the facility. Mercy High School will closely monitor circulation and perform several cycles to ensure new air flow throughout the facility.

Plexiglass Shields

For the safety of students, faculty, and staff, Mercy High School has installed plexiglass in high-trafficked areas such as the reception area, office of academic and student affairs, the business office, and our health rooms. Science labs, computer labs, and other areas will utilize modular units to create separation between individuals when social distancing cannot be maintained.

Movement on Campus

In the east wing of campus, all halls and stairs are one-way and are clearly marked with arrows and signage. While in the west area of campus, including the administrative hallway and science wing, traffic is one-way on each side of the hall and clearly marked. If an area becomes occupied by someone who is suspected of being infected with COVID-19, that area will be closed for appropriate disinfecting measures.



Plexiglass shields will create additional barriers between individuals in high-trafficked areas.



Students will have convenient access to hand-sanitizing stations on campus.

School Day Routine

All students will have an assigned location when not in class. Students should leave campus as soon as possible once school commitments are concluded. Parents or guardians of any students who need to remain on campus after 4 p.m. must submit a written request to the Dean of Students. These students will report to the dining hall and remain socially distanced from others, and continue to wear their masks.

Hygienic Practices

Time, education, signage, and other resources will be provided to assist all members of the community in daily hygiene, adherence to social distancing, regular cleaning, and other best practices.