Forward Together

A Progress Report on the 2020 Fall Semester at Aurora University

Revised 31 July 2020
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## APPENDIX 1 CONTACT LIST

The 2019 novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is one of a family of viruses that causes diseases in humans and animals. Experts believe that the virus primarily spreads from person to person via respiratory droplets. As Americans discovered this summer, the virus is highly infectious and spreads easily. Frequently, individuals without actual symptoms pass COVID-19 to those in close proximity.

Currently no preventative protocols for COVID-19 exist. In the absence of a vaccine, the most important prevention strategies are simple — social distancing and face coverings are the best defense against spread of the virus. Our assumption at Aurora University is that COVID-19 will remain active at least until the end of 2020 and perhaps beyond. We recognize too that, by its very nature, the pandemic is fluid and ever-changing.

Aurora University cannot guarantee that the virus will not impact members of our community. In fact, we understand that the risk of contracting COVID-19 will remain elevated until a vaccine is widely available. The optimism of June gave way to the hard reality of July as the number of cases have been increasing in many parts of the country, including Illinois. It is truly an unprecedented time.

**Development of the Plan**

As last spring’s classes ended, a multi-disciplinary task group launched deliberations about the 2020–2021 academic year. Given the many uncertainties surrounding the novel coronavirus, two models were developed. Both were informed by the outcomes of student and parent surveys and the university’s strong system of values and ethics.

The first model anticipated a return to modified campus-based learning, assuming that external conditions would remain constant or perhaps would even improve.

The second model called for primary reliance upon improved remote learning strategies in the event that external conditions worsened.

Both options envisioned campus facilities and services open for student use and extensive safety measures in place to protect students, faculty, staff, and guests.

Shortly before the Fourth of July, AU published a Progress Report that outlined current thinking regarding the forthcoming fall semester. The document provided a preview of how the university would function with the first model in place. Behind the scenes, however, university professionals continued to build out both models, knowing that it might be necessary to pivot if external conditions warranted such a decision.
Particular attention was devoted to analysis of data and reports issued by a wide range of authorities and organizations. Aurora University leaders follow closely guidance from the following:

» Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
» Disaster Resilient Universities Network
» Illinois Department of Public Health
» Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Research Center
» Kane County Health Department
» National Collegiate Athletic Association

In addition, the planning process was informed by ongoing dialogue with students, faculty, staff, and parents and the outcomes of two surveys administered to students and families. Members of the university’s Board of Trustees monitored development of the plan by conferring regularly with institutional leaders and meeting frequently.

**Communication**

At the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, university leaders committed to pursuing a multi-faceted communication strategy, recognizing the vital stake that all had in developments on campus:

Regular COVID-19 updates were provided via the institution’s websites for the Aurora, George Williams, and Woodstock campuses respectively.

The university’s president communicated frequently with students and parents via email messages.

Likewise select members of the senior management group provided regular updates in their specific areas of expertise.

A new digital newsletter (*The Spartan Way*) was disseminated weekly to the university’s student-athletes.

Deans of the university’s five schools (Arts and Sciences, Business and Public Policy, Education and Human Performance, Nursing, and Social Work) shared bi-weekly updates with undergraduates and graduates students.

Similarly, students enrolled on the George Williams College campus and at Woodstock Center received a regular digital newsletter. Students pursuing degrees through AU Online also learned about university plans via a newsletter.

Often recipients of messages and newsletters responded with comments or questions of their own, thereby creating a vibrant culture of communication.
**Guiding Principles**

As this planning process draws to an end, the Aurora University community affirms the five principles that guided our deliberative and decision-making process:

Our first priority remains the safety and security of the university’s students, faculty and staff. By extension, we recognize also an obligation to the welfare of the extended AU family that includes parents, siblings, grandparents, children, and friends.

Our mission at Aurora University is to transform lives through education. This is the purpose that draws us together as an inclusive community dedicated to teaching and learning.

Given the long and rich history of the university, we are committed also to setting the right example, to advancing the values of our democracy, and to evidencing ethical behaviors and social responsibility in all matters.

As a university community, we affirm also the importance of a systemic approach to problem solving, data-driven methodologies, decisions rooted in evidence, and continuous adherence to our core values and ethical sensibilities.

We recognize also that knowledge and understanding of the novel coronavirus continues to evolve as does the pandemic itself. The current situation is unusually fluid and subject to change. In the midst of this unprecedented uncertainty, the university seeks to provide clear and consistent direction to members of its extended family.

It is with these principles in mind that Aurora University announces its decision to fulfill its mission on its main campus during the 2020 fall semester through “enhanced remote delivery” of classes. Though all AU locations will rely upon consistent risk mitigation efforts, adjusted strategies and plans are in place for the George Williams College campus in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, and the Woodstock Center in McHenry County.¹

Readers should not assume that the forthcoming fall will be like last spring. Thanks to ongoing input and consultation, we understand clearly the problems of the spring and have worked for months to solve problems, fashion new solutions, and create a plan that will work for everyone. We believe that the strategies set forth here, though different from those announced by some peers, offer the best opportunity for a safe, coherent, and uninterrupted fall learning experience.

¹ More information is available on the GWC and Woodstock Center website.
II. RISK MITIGATION

*Spartan Safety*

At the heart of the university’s risk mitigation strategy are the eight simple measures set forth in the *Spartan Safety* document that appears below. These recommendations place special emphasis on non-pharmacologic interventions and incorporate sound public health practices. Students, faculty, staff, and visitors, will be required to abide by the *Spartan Safety* expectations presented here.

**SPARTAN SAFETY**

Aurora University follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for the protection of everyone on campus. Under our **SPARTAN SAFETY** policy, members of the AU community need to:

- **STAY AT LEAST 6 FEET** (about 2 arms’ length) from other people.
- **WASH YOUR HANDS** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. **HAND SANITIZER** may be used as an alternative.
- **COVER YOUR COUGH OR SNEEZE** with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- When in public, **WEAR A FACE COVERING** over your nose and mouth.
- **DO NOT TOUCH** your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- **CLEAN AND DISINFECT** frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- **STAY HOME** when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- **MONITOR FOR SYMPTOMS DAILY** to include cough; shortness of breath or difficulty breathing; fever; chills; muscle pain; sore throat; loss of taste or smell; nausea; vomiting; and diarrhea.
Signage regarding the Spartan Safety requirements are posted prominently throughout Aurora University facilities. The Spartan Safety precautions are our “new normal,” the foundation we will build upon in a number of additional ways as we return to our campuses and move forward together.

**Campus Screening**

Members of the AU community will be required to complete and return a health questionnaire as they return to our campuses. In addition, all will be expected to self-monitor for symptoms and to seek medical care in the event that symptoms associated with COVID-19 are evident. Members of the campus community may be asked to respond to screening questions as they enter some facilities. Others may be invited to have their temperature taken. Enhanced screening protocols likely will be established in select programs where social distancing may be more difficult. Here too, full compliance is expected.

**Density and Physical Distancing**

A number of strategies will reduce density on the Aurora campus during the 2020 fall semester. Since courses will be delivered via remote instruction, fewer students will be on the campus at one time. Designated employees will continue to work from home. The capacity of many office, class, and meeting rooms will be reduced by 50% to accommodate CDC physical distancing recommendations. Barriers, such as acrylic shields, will be used in areas where close contact may occur such as handwashing stations and laboratories or areas where items are exchanged. In these instances, barriers will serve in place of the suggested 6’ of separation. Floor markings will be used throughout facilities.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Face coverings will be worn by all members of the university community and visitors in indoor public spaces. Masks also will be worn in outdoor settings where it is not possible to maintain the recommended 6’ of social distance. The university has secured a large inventory of masks and gloves for use when certain functions are performed.

**Hygiene and Cleaning**

Stations located strategically throughout our campuses will provide easy access to supplies of hand sanitizer, antibacterial wipes, and replacement masks. Enhanced cleaning procedures, consistent with CDC guidelines, will be used. Frequent handwashing will be encouraged.

**COVID-19 Testing**

Aurora University will rely upon a multi-dimensional testing program to maintain the safety of its campus community.

First, through collaboration with the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA), diagnostics based upon polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing will be used to detect the presence
of viral genetic materials in those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to the virus. These tests will be made available at university expense. Similar arrangements will be in place at the university’s other residential setting in Wisconsin.

Second, the institution will conduct regular surveillance testing, also in alliance with an outside professional firm, of certain populations such as student-athletes participating in strength and conditioning activities or students living in university residence halls. These procedures will follow recently approved FDA guidelines for processing PCR testing with saliva samples.

**Isolation and Quarantine**

Individuals exposed to the coronavirus will be required to follow CDC recommendations to isolate or quarantine. In the event that students are exposed, the university’s strong preference is isolation, quarantine, or recuperation at home. In the event this is not possible, students will be housed at a local hotel with appropriately private facilities. University health services personnel will monitor students on a daily basis. Food delivery will be arranged. Other campus services will be provided via remote delivery. To the extent possible, academic and instructional activities will continue. Every effort will be made to honor relevant FERPA and HIPPA requirements.

**Vulnerable Populations**

At Aurora University, we understand that individuals of all ages should take precautions regarding COVID-19. Individuals at heightened risk are defined by the CDC as follows:

...people in nursing homes or long-term care facilities, older adults (generally aged 65 and older), and people of any age who are immune-compromised and/or have serious underlying medical conditions such as asthma, chronic lung disease, diabetes, liver disease, serious heart conditions, chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis and severe obesity.

Employees and students with such higher risk conditions or who live with individuals with higher risks will receive appropriate accommodations.

**Informed Consent**

All members of the university community are accountable for complying with requirements. It is important, therefore, that all understand and accept the risks associated with returning to campus during the 2020 fall semester. Faculty and staff will be expected to complete, sign, and submit informed consent forms, while students will be required to read, understand, and sign a special COVID-19 compact.
III. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Safety, certainty, adaptability, flexibility, and quality will be our watchwords as we move into the 2020 fall semester. The virus calls for the best in all of us as we care, not just for ourselves and those we love, but for the welfare of others. In the midst of extraordinary uncertainty, the AU plan offers a number of distinctive advantages and benefits for all members of our community:

Decisions about coming to the campus or learning from home are left in the hands of students and families. Students may progress toward their educational goals in spite of the pandemic.

The campus will remain open, so resources and facilities will be available for use with safety measures in place. Those who found it difficult to study or concentrate at home now have the option of coming to the campus.

Campus offices will be staffed. A student seeking academic support will find counsel or tutoring regularly available. In most instances, appointments will be required. Drop-in service will be more limited.

Student employment and work study opportunities will be available for those who qualify.

Additional technology resources will be made available to students free of charge through an innovative new “laptop loaner” program.

Residence halls will be open on a modified basis. For the most part, students will live in singles. Though social life will be significantly different at AU, there will still be opportunities to gather safely with peers.

The food service will be in operation with a number of safety precautions and modifications in place.

And finally, AU students, faculty, and staff will not experience a sudden, disruptive evacuation of the campus. Barring truly dire circumstances, university life will unfold uninterrupted.

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2 External accreditation requirements may require some use of campus resources in select programs. Information regarding such circumstances will be communicated directly to students by the university’s academic deans. Every effort will be made to identify suitable workarounds, though university leaders acknowledge that some of this may lie outside of our control.
Learning Models

With an enhanced remote learning plan in place, classes are synchronous thanks to the use of technology. Classes meet at regularly scheduled times with faculty members and classmates engaging in a video classroom. Summer professional development experiences are preparing university faculty to enrich students’ educational experiences significantly. AU will continue to rely upon course management systems such as Moodle to make essential and supplemental materials available.

The 2020 fall semester plan, while similar in some ways to last spring’s experience, will be better. All university facilities will be open for use with safety precautions and density restrictions in place. Critical services will be delivered in two modalities — face-to-face or through telephony and Zoom. Optional campus-based learning experiences will be available for those able to come to our campuses. Extended faculty office hours will be scheduled in order to facilitate direct consultation with AU professors.

Undergraduates must select the single delivery mode that best suits their purposes. It will not be possible to enroll in both online and remote delivery courses. Decisions regarding 2020 fall semester should be discussed with Student Success Center advisors to ensure correct registration. Contact information is provided at the conclusion of this document.

Fall Semester Calendar

Aurora University, like many other institutions of higher learning, will condense its 2020 fall semester calendar on both the Aurora and George Williams College campuses and at the Woodstock Center. Classes will meet on Labor Day (7 September 2020). The traditional Fall Break (16–17 October 2020) will be canceled. While some colleges and universities are opting to hold Saturday classes, we have decided not to do this at AU.

<table>
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<th>2020 Fall Semester Calendar</th>
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<td>24 August 2020</td>
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<td>30 August 2020</td>
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<td>8 November 2020</td>
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Current plans call for holding the university’s mid-year Commencement Ceremony on Saturday 12 December. Of course, the nature and timing of this celebration is subject to change in the event that external authorities issue new executive orders. During Phase 4 of the paradigm established by Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, gatherings in excess of 50 people are prohibited. At this writing (July 2020), it appears likely that a virtual ceremony will be held.

**Graduate Instructional Delivery**

Aurora University offers a variety of graduate learning experiences, designed to serve the customized academic needs of various audiences. Those available via AU Online will continue as usual. Courses that normally are campus-based will rely upon enhanced remote delivery.

**Off-campus Learning**

Off-campus learning opportunities provide students with opportunities to hone their knowledge and skills in a wide range of work environments. Some accredited programs require a certain number and variety of field or clinical placements. In other cases, particular majors or programs feature required field or internship experiences. In anticipation of the 2020–2021 academic year, work is underway to ensure high-quality, off-campus student experiences. Information will be provided — throughout 2020–2021 — as plans are finalized with each off-campus entity. Individuals with specific questions should reach out to deans of the university’s five schools (Arts and Sciences, Business and Public Policy, Education and Human Performance, Nursing, and Social Work). A listing of phone numbers and email addresses appears at the end of this document.

**Academic Support**

All of the university’s academic support facilities will be open with safeguards in place. In the spring, when the entire campus was closed in response to direction from state authorities, these vital services were delivered remotely. This fall, our students will have expanded opportunities for assistance face-to-face or via remote delivery if preferred.

**Technology**

Students and parents indicated that the effectiveness of the spring’s remote delivery option was compromised in some cases by the absence of appropriate equipment and access to the internet. The university is prepared to provide “loaner laptops” this fall. In addition, facilities on campus, modified with appropriate safeguards, will provide ready access to Wi-Fi, software, and the internet.
IV. CAMPUS LIFE

Previous portions of this document detail risk mitigation and academic plans for the fall semester. This section is dedicated to an overview of campus life.

Residence Life

Residence halls on the Aurora campus will be open during the 2020 fall semester for single occupancy only. Residents will be expected to adhere strictly to Spartan Safety guidelines and other restrictions relating to toilet and shower areas, study rooms, laundry facilities, and common areas. In addition, they will be expected to comply with the terms of the Spartan Compact document developed with the 2020 fall semester in mind. A modified guest policy will be in place.

Housing contracts will cover the period from an assigned move-in date (TBD) to Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 5:00 p.m. Prior to this deadline, information relating to 2021 spring housing options will be available so that students and families are able to make plans.

The university has contracted with a local hotel in the event that off-campus isolation and quarantine facilities become necessary. Our strong preference will be for students to return home under such circumstances, but we understand that this may not be possible for everyone. Finally, the university may be able to accommodate the needs of students who want to live in a single room in an off-campus location.

Campus Dining

Aurora University recently entered into an agreement with Chartwells to provide dining services on our campuses. We are enthused about the wide range of options our new partner will offer to members of the AU community during this extraordinary period of time. Chartwells is known for its commitment to quality and innovation.

The new firm will implement aggressive safety measures on both campuses. Chartwells employees will be accountable to high standards of safety, including daily wellness checks, continuous use of PPE, and frequent handwashing. Dining facilities will be reconfigured to allow for appropriate social distancing, contactless checkout, social distancing, traffic management, and continuous cleaning and sanitation.

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3 A copy of the Spartan Compact is provided at the end of this report.
Campus customers will continue to enjoy familiar venues and favorite menu items, albeit with a long list of new safety measures in place. For example, face coverings will be required and will be removed only for eating and drinking. Self-service will no longer be possible. Instead pre-packaged portions, or service by Chartwells associates, will be the norm. An increased emphasis on take out and delivery options also will be evident.

**Athletics and Recreational Sports**

In a recent decision, the Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference announced its decision to move all fall competition to the 2021 spring semester. Specific information was shared by coaches with student-athletes in individual messages and calls. AU does plan to provide strength, conditioning, teambuilding, and development opportunities to fall, winter, and spring sport participants throughout the 2020 fall semester in strict accordance with NCAA recommendations.

**Travel**

Only essential, domestic travel will be supported by Aurora University during the 2020–2021 academic year. No international travel will be sponsored. Those individuals who do travel beyond the United States will be required to do the following:

- ✓ Communicate their plans in advance of departure to Human Resources
- ✓ Follow all relevant CDC and IDPH guidelines and requirements
- ✓ Self-quarantine at home for 14 days prior to returning to campus
- ✓ Check and record their temperature daily
- ✓ Communicate as required with public health authorities

In general the university encourages students, faculty, and staff to consider carefully the potential consequences of international travel and to reach decisions accordingly.

**Campus Events**

While the university will not be able to offer large events, due to the restrictions in place during Phase IV of the *Restore Illinois Plan*, students still will have an opportunity to engage in a wide range of activities on campus and through virtual connections. We look forward to introducing our exciting new Club Spartan venue to students looking for a place to grab a quick bite, converse with a friend, or gather to enjoy entertainment (with appropriate social distance of course).
SPARTAN COMPACT

All of us in the Aurora University community have a communal responsibility, as we continue to navigate these challenging and unprecedented times, to balance the health and safety needs of our community with the university’s core mission. To carry on the educational, academic, and service missions of our University while minimizing person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 and protecting those most vulnerable to the disease, AU puts forth this Spartan Compact that outlines our behavioral expectations for AU students in re-opening living and learning in our campus community. By joining us during the 2020-2021 academic year, you agree to adhere to the behavioral expectations outlined below. Further, you agree to adhere to strict physical distancing and use of facial coverings for the 14 days prior to your return to the campus community. And in addition, any residential students coming from out of state are expected to quarantine at home for 14 days prior to their move in date.

At the University’s discretion, there may be other requirements for students in certain categories, such as student-athletes, students in certain programs of study, etc. These requirements will be communicated directly to those particular students.

Aurora University Spartan Compact 2020–2021

I understand, as a member of the AU Spartan community during the 2020-2021 academic year, that I am an important part of this community and that we are stronger as a community when we all do our part to keep our campus safe. I understand that the health and safety measures I am being asked to undertake are necessary to protect the health and safety of others in my community and beyond. I agree to abide by all federal, state, city, and Aurora University mandates, policies, protocols, and procedures related to COVID-19, and I agree to participate in any required training.

I understand that violations of this Compact will be handled by the Office of Student Conduct according to the procedures set forth by the Aurora University A-Book. I agree that, should it be determined that my behavior jeopardized the health and safety of others in the AU community, I may be directed to refrain from participating in any on-campus activities (including athletics), my access to campus buildings may be restricted, and I could be subject to suspension from the University.

The Pledge:

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

I AGREE:

» To monitor my temperature and participate in daily health screening measures to determine whether it is appropriate for me to be on campus. If I have a change in my health status, I will notify AU Health Services and will comply with their direction.
» To stay at home or in my residence hall room if I am sick with COVID-19 symptoms or know that I have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. I will follow the university's protocols for isolation or quarantine.
To maintain appropriate (6 feet) physical distance from others whenever possible.
To wear a cloth facial covering over nose and mouth when walking in public (e.g. hallways, common areas, restrooms, across campus) both inside and outside of campus buildings.
To wash my hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds throughout each day and before and after interactions with others.
To cover my cough or sneeze with tissues (or into elbow/sleeve), then wash my hands.
To clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, especially those shared by others (e.g. photocopiers, computer keyboards, door handles).
To be up-to-date on all vaccines.
To receive a flu shot.

CAMPUS MOVEMENT

I AGREE:

» To congregate only in university designated outdoor and indoor areas of campus, wearing a facial covering, maintaining adequate physical distance, and complying with all signage.
» To sit only in available designated seats in dining venues, lounge areas, the library, the computer labs, and other campus buildings.
» To follow any designated procedures for entering and exiting campus buildings.

TRAVEL & GUESTS

I AGREE:

» To adhere to all regulations regarding guests outlined in the revised guest policy as set forth by Residence Life.
» To limit all unnecessary personal travel.
» To comply, if I must travel, with quarantine and testing requirements based on guidance of the Illinois Department of Public Health and the public health agency of my travel destination.

SOCIAL LIFE AND RECREATION

I AGREE:

» To participate in student clubs, performing arts groups, intramural and club sports, and any other University-sponsored student life activity virtually as much as possible and, when not virtual, to observe the physical distancing guidelines and other COVID-19-related safety protocols adopted by the University.
» To refrain from organizing, hosting, or attending events, parties, or other social gatherings off-campus that may cause safety risks to me and other members of the community.
» To acknowledge that drinking alcohol and using other drugs will increase my risk of engaging in risky behavior and/or needing medical treatment, including the increased risk of being exposed to higher-risk contact with others. Alcohol consumption and recreational drug use will not be considered an excuse for unauthorized risky COVID-19-related behavior.

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Informed Consent

I acknowledge that there exist heightened and unpredictable health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. These risks include exposure to asymptomatic carriers of the COVID-19 virus and the transfer of the virus through interpersonal communications and/or sharing spaces with others.

In the interest of health and public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, I acknowledge that I will report to AU Health Services any symptoms of COVID-19, exposure to COVID-19, or a personal positive test for COVID-19 that occur within 14 days prior to the start of the fall semester as well as any time after the start of the fall semester.

I acknowledge that the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and state and local health departments are regularly reviewing and updating their respective guidance on the pandemic and its impact on higher education.

I acknowledge that while the university cannot guarantee that I will not be exposed to the virus on campus, that the university has implemented guidelines to help mitigate its transmission and limit the spread.

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to abide by the guidelines stated in the Spartan Compact to protect myself as well as others with whom I interact on campus.
CONTACT LIST

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» Undecided (last names A-F)

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