

To: The Stevenson Community

From: President Elliot Hirshman

Subject: Spring Semester Planning

Date: October 21, 2020

As we reach the mid-point of the Fall semester, I write to reflect on the semester to date and share our plans for the Spring 2021 semester.

This fall, Stevenson University and higher education, more generally, faced the challenge of pursuing our educational mission in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. At Stevenson, we approached this challenge by attempting to provide a range of face-to-face and remote opportunities for students, faculty, and staff.

We expected the fall to be challenging and, in many ways, it has been. Creating new approaches for education and campus safety, as well as supporting remote education and co-curricular activities, is a new model for higher education and, at times, we have missed the mark, individually and collectively.

At the same time, there have been many, many examples where we have moved forward. Education and co-curricular activities are occurring on campus and remotely. Faculty and staff are carrying out the critical work of preparing our students for their futures, their careers, and for leadership in an increasingly complex world. This is how it should be. Our entire leadership team and I are grateful for the efforts of our students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and community supporters to carry on our Stevenson mission and values despite the pandemic.

Most importantly, our commitment to moving forward together as one community and supporting each other in our aspirations remains strong.

In this context, I wish to share our plans for the Spring 2021 semester. Here, I will outline our approaches in a number of areas. On each topic, there will be associated links and/or follow-up communications from university offices that will provide additional directions and details in the coming weeks.

### **Academic Instruction**

Provost Gorman, our Deans, and our Faculty continue to work collaboratively to provide more face-to-face instructional opportunities, which you will see reflected in the Spring 2021 schedule of classes published by the Registrar's Office. Students will retain the ability to request remote participation if face-to-face instruction is not appropriate for them. The planned delivery format for all Spring courses (in-person or online) is indicated in the schedule, and updates to the planned course delivery formats will be posted at the following link: [Spring 2021 Schedule of Classes](#).

### **Academic Calendar**

The Spring 2021 Academic Calendar is very similar to the traditional Spring calendar with similar start and end dates. In order to minimize travel and the associated health risks, we will follow the approach many universities are using of distributing Spring Break days as individual break days throughout the semester. Specific calendar dates are provided at the following link: [Spring 2021 Academic Calendar](#).

**Residence Life & Move-In**

The Residence Halls will continue to be open in the Spring. Prior to moving in for the Spring 2021 semester, students will have to demonstrate a negative COVID-19 PCR test result. The testing and move-in process will be expedited so that they will be completed within a two-week period. The Office of Residence Life & Housing will be sending a separate communication to students about the details of the Spring COVID testing and move-in process.

The Office of Residence Life & Housing will also contact students who did not live in the Residence Halls in the Fall regarding their interest in living on campus during the Spring semester. As in the Fall, students will have the option to live in a nearby hotel as well as on campus.

**Remote Work Options for Faculty & Staff**

Accommodations and remote work options for staff will remain in place for the Spring semester. Accommodations and adjustments for faculty will also continue as detailed in a recent memo from Provost Gorman. Faculty can access this information [on the Provost's Office Portal site](#).

**Co-curricular Activities (Athletics, Band, Student Activities)**

Stevenson will continue our efforts to safely expand the scope and breadth of co-curricular activities. Decisions regarding the start of inter-collegiate athletics competition in specific sports will be made in cooperation with the MAC athletic conference and will follow the safety protocols established by the NCAA.

**Commencement Plans**

I have asked Vice President Sue Kenney and Provost Gorman to create a plan for holding face-to-face graduation activities this May. While we will have to modify our traditional approaches to follow public health guidelines, our goal is to provide each graduate an opportunity to celebrate their achievements on campus this Spring. The planning includes May 2020, August 2020, December 2020, and May 2021 graduates. We will share details regarding our approach at the start of the Spring semester.

I wish to close by thanking every member of our community for your support of Stevenson. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have been unprecedented, but so has our collective response.

Through your commitment, we will continue to move forward together.

Sincerely,

Elliot Hirshman  
President