



May 17, 2020

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

I write to announce the Fall 2020 academic calendar as recommended on Friday, May 15 by the Future Planning Group (FPG) and with the full support of the Office of the Provost and our public health experts. Two major changes will stand out as you review the following schedule: first, there will be **no Fall Break** and second, we will conclude face-to-face instruction **at Thanksgiving Break**. The new schedule meets requirements for federal financial aid and for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Please note the schedule details for the Columbia campus:

Aug. 20: Classes begin

Sept. 7: Labor Day will be a Remote Class Day; classes will be held online and asynchronous for all classes

Oct. 15-16: Fall Break is **cancelled**; classes will be held on these days

Nov. 3: General Election Day will be a Remote Class Day; classes will be held online and asynchronous for all classes

Nov. 24: Face-to-face instruction **will end**

Nov. 25-29: Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 30: Remote Class Day

Dec. 1: Remote Class Day

Dec. 2-4: Reading Days

Dec. 7-14: Final Exam period

The recommendation to cancel Fall Break and essentially accelerate in-person instruction for the semester was developed with significant input from faculty, staff and student government leadership serving on the FPG. Two critical pieces of information informed these changes:

- Canceling Fall Break — the public health risks associated with thousands of students and faculty returning to campus after Fall Break travels could be significant for the campus and Columbia communities and could jeopardize the continuation of the semester.
- Remote learning following Thanksgiving Break — our best current modelling predicts a spike in cases of COVID-19 at the beginning of December, which also will likely coincide with traditional flu season.

While fall semester will include face-to-face instruction, it should be noted that a portion of courses already scheduled to be delivered face-to-face and for which many students are already registered will need to be switched over the summer to online for the safety of students and their instructors. All undergraduate and graduate students will have the opportunity to be re-advised. All student learning and evaluation occurring after Thanksgiving, including exams and tests, will be done remotely.

I realize that students and faculty look forward to getting away and recharging in the middle of the semester, and I appreciate that many of you will not be pleased with the decision to cancel Fall Break. These changes are part of the **new normal** that all of us must embrace as we return to campus for work and study, and they are necessary for us to successfully resume in-person instruction. Most importantly, they reflect our top priority: your health, safety and wellbeing.

Many questions about the fall schedule must still be answered, including December commencement, and we will update you as additional details are developed. We will also be prepared to alter our plans to accommodate changes in the public health environment on campus and in Columbia.

This virus continues to ask a great deal of us, and we must be ready to respond thoughtfully to any development or situation. I am extremely proud of the FPG and am grateful to every participant in this impressive group of leaders. These experts have given me a new level of confidence in our capacity to resume in-person classes on August 20 and to accommodate those students, faculty and staff who choose to work and study remotely.

Thank you for your continued support and for your willingness to work creatively with this new fall schedule. Working together as a team, we will make the Fall 2020 semester an excellent and safe experience for students, faculty and staff.

Forever to Thee,



Bob Caslen