



Larry Hogan
Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor

Ian D. MacFarlane
Chair

James D. Fielder, Jr., Ph. D.
Secretary

May 22, 2020

Dear President:

Governor Hogan announced on May 13, 2020, the beginning of Stage One of the ‘Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery,’ which includes moving from a Stay at Home order to a Safer at Home public health advisory. This Stage One status allows for the gradual reopening of retail, manufacturing, houses of worship, and some personal services. Local counties may provide additional requirements for the gradual reopening of various businesses and organizations.

At the appropriate time when you start planning to open your campus to in-person instruction, please inform MHEC of your intent and plans to comply with current executive orders, local orders, and guidance from the Maryland Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control. You can send a letter of intent to implement in-person instruction to covid19.mhec@maryland.gov. Your letter should provide as much detail as possible regarding in-person instruction and policies and procedures to ensure the utmost safety of students, faculty, and staff. Please include any specific documentation that is relevant (e.g., explicit policies, enrollment or registration forms, written cleaning procedures, etc.).

As you consider opening your campus to in-person instruction and services, we encourage you and your campus leadership to conduct a thorough risk analysis that contemplates (a) the students and community that you serve, (b) the capacity of your faculty and staff, (c) the resources available to your campus to meet the safety protocols recommended by the CDC, such as protective gear, cleaning procedures, etc., and (d) the academic programs that your campus offers. Enclosed with this communication are several resources from the CDC, OSHA, AHCA, and others regarding the reopening of postsecondary institutions.

It is important to note that The Roadmap expects that people currently teleworking shall continue to telework for the duration of the State of Emergency (p.26). We encourage campuses to continue to utilize distance education (or remote learning) for coursework that can remain in a distance education format with little or no impact to the learning outcomes of the course or program objectives. Similarly, campus services that can be offered through teleconferencing and other remote modalities without compromising the efficacy of those services should remain offered in that capacity. However, we understand that there are courses, curricula, content, and assessments that are not conducive to a distance education or remote format. You and your faculty should conduct a thorough analysis to identify courses that can remain in a distance education or remote format. Campuses should also consider the potential disruption of instruction that could occur in the fall should there be a spike in COVID-19 cases. When feasible, campuses should develop plans and protocols that minimize the potential disruption of instruction.

Similarly, The Roadmap also expects that physical distancing and masking requirements shall continue until the lifting of the State of Emergency (p.26). Campuses that plan to reopen for in-person instruction and services must adhere to the physical distancing and masking requirements as currently required through Governor Hogan's executive orders and local requirements. This may mean providing students, faculty, and staff access to protective equipment. This also may mean that courses that require in-person instruction should be significantly limited to ensure the health safety of students and faculty. If you campus proceeds with offering in-person instruction or services, you and your leadership should develop a response plan should a campus member test positive for COVID-19. This plan should include a communication plan and ensure that FERPA and HIPAA protections are maintained. First Aid training should be provided.

Again when the time is right and campuses begin to reopen residential facilities to students, it is very important that this effort is done in coordination with safety protocols in place. Should campuses move forward in allowing students to return to residential housing, significant efforts should be made to maximize social distancing in dormitories and extra precautions are implemented to ensure that public residential spaces are adequately cleaned according to CDC guidelines. Students should be made aware of the risks they may be taking in returning to residential facilities on campus and campuses should be prepared to vacate the facilities if an outbreak of COVID-19 occurs.

As noted in earlier communications, all campus leaders should be working with their local health departments as you implement protocols and procedures specific to your campus and the students and communities that you serve. While the state is under a Safer at Home public health advisory, local counties may have additional restrictions regarding business operations. We also encourage collaboration with other colleges and universities in your area to best address the needs of your students and the community. You may contact Dr. Cliff Mitchell at the Maryland Department of Health with inquiries not otherwise addressed with your local health department.

Governor Hogan released the "Maryland Strong Roadmap to Recovery" on April 24, 2020, which outlines four building blocks to gradually and responsibly reopen Maryland's economy. The building blocks include Personal Protective Equipment, Surge Capacity, Testing, and Contact Tracing. We know that campuses across Maryland have already contributed to these building blocks by providing supplies, supporting students to enter the health care workforce as quickly as possible, and providing local support for expertise, space, and other auxiliary services. Thank you for your leadership to support these early and ongoing efforts.

Please continue to keep MHEC informed of your decisions as you move forward with summer and fall instruction.

Thank you,



Dr. James D. Fielder
Secretary