



## **Messiah University Return Plan Executive Summary**

*Last Updated Aug. 13, 2020*

**Note:** This summary reflects the content of Messiah's return plan prior to student move-in and the start of the 2020-2021 academic year. For the most current information and developments, please visit the content on the [Bridge to Reopen Messiah](#) website and the University's [emergency blog](#).

While we believe that moving to a fully remote education in the spring semester of 2020 was the best choice at the time, we also believe that returning to a combination of in-person and remote this fall is the best way to facilitate the rich and meaningful experiences and daily interactions that are ultimately a hallmark of the Messiah experience. However, returning successfully will require the entire Messiah community to understand the risks, commit to reducing those risks, and to fully align our personal behavior with what is best for the common good of the Messiah University community. Creating a safe learning environment on Messiah's campuses will require the mindful, coordinated and committed participation of our students, faculty and staff. Through this guide, we identify the key best-practices and actions necessary for protecting our educational environment.

We have focused on five critical protocols:

1. Aligning our plans based upon regulations and guidance from PA Dept. of Health the Governor's Office, and our local healthcare system.
2. Planning for testing, surveillance and tracing.
3. Implementing health management measures through the Engle Center
4. Implementing risk reduction protocols for the entire community
5. Implementing flexible education protocols, including revising our calendar.

The plan is based upon a multi-layered, integrated approach to public health safety that will continue to change as guidance changes and developments in the pandemic dictate. It may be necessary to modify plans. The Engle Center maintains close and effective connections to our local health department and our local healthcare system so that we have the guidance, support and resources necessary for navigating the current pandemic matters as effectively as possible.

### **Testing, Tracing, and Quarantining**

Prior to classes starting, undergraduate residential students will be asked to commit to a self-quarantine for 14 days. In addition, prior to arriving for move-in, students and their accompanying family members will complete a self-screening. Upon arrival, all individuals will have their temperatures taken before they can proceed to campus and enter student residences. Anyone who presents with symptoms or recent exposure to COVID-19 will not be allowed on campus and will need to provide a negative COVID-19 PCR test prior to moving-in. Options and support will be provided to these students for a remote start to the semester.

Please see the sections on Pre Campus Preparation and Student Move In for additional details. On-campus graduate students, commuter students and employees will be asked to follow best practice health and safety guidelines. Please see the section the appendix for the specifics of the pre-campus quarantine expectations and best practice health and safety guidelines.

Messiah's testing program has two branches. First, prior to opening, the University will test certain student populations who are at greater risk for exposure to the virus and planning to be in-person this fall. Secondly, the Engle Center is prepared to test students and employees throughout the semester due to symptoms or exposure. This protocol aligns with guidance with from CDC.

A team of approximately 30 professionals from across campus will be trained in contact tracing, utilizing a 6 hour course through Johns Hopkins University. The team will include professionals from the Engle Center (medical and counseling staff), residence life, sports medicine, human resources and our registered dietician. As individuals with COVID-19 are identified within our on-campus community, a contact tracer will be assigned and will inform any close contacts of the need to quarantine and/or be tested.

Smith Apartments A and B have been set aside as space for quarantine and isolation of undergraduate residential students, who will be provided with a range of support services, including facilitating their coursework, attention to medical and mental health, and food delivery.

#### **Additional Risk Reduction Measures**

The University Community will also follow additional risk reduction measures. Specifically, six health practices will be implemented University-wide:

1. Masks must be worn. While undergraduate students will be able to relax the need for masks on their own hall after an initial waiting period, masks will be worn by everyone in the community when on campus (Grantham and Winding Hill).
2. Social distancing must be practiced. The University has taken measures to facilitate social distancing in the classrooms, the residence halls, and the dining facilities. Where social distancing cannot be reliably facilitated, plans have been changed. For example, chapel will be replaced with a combination of daily devotional messaging, weekly podcasts, and working with students by floor for faith development programming.
3. Our cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be significantly enhanced at both our Grantham and Winding Hill campuses. In addition, all members of the community will have increased access to cleaning supplies so that work areas can be cleaned immediately after use.
4. Respiratory etiquette must be exercised and training on expectations will be communicated regularly.
5. Everyone must wash their hands frequently and hand sanitizer will be readily available for times when hand washing may not be immediately possible.
6. Everyone must report their temperature and wellness each day, and commit to staying home when not well.

These measures are present in the plans of each department. In addition, the University has significantly reduced University travel, campus visitors, and adjusted our calendar so that in-

person classes end at Thanksgiving. Members of the community are all asked to limit personal travel.

### **Academic Programs**

We are committed to creating a physical environment characterized by appropriate social distancing and care for vulnerable populations, while also offering an engaging and excellent academic learning environment for all students, whether on-line, remote or face-to-face. As such, we will be delivering courses face-to-face using modified spaces as well as leveraging technology tools and investments to make the in-person classroom accessible to remote students. Extensive and detailed resources and support have been made available to faculty over the summer as they plan for delivery of Enhanced Face-to-Face and HyFlex courses. With students learning in community, both remotely and in-person, the student experience will have consistency through standardized use of Canvas across classes and a wide range of ongoing support will be available for both faculty and students throughout the fall. The Academic Programs plan also addresses the unique needs of students in clinicals, lab classes, field placements, practicums, the performing arts, and other experiential learning opportunities.

### **Undergraduate Co-curricular Experience**

The Messiah University co-curricular education is an integral part of delivering our undergraduate mission, and we recognize how much students grow through their engagement in athletics, arts, clubs, campus leadership positions, and much more. Our co-curricular educators are reimagining these experiences so that students have opportunities to engage in new ways with particular focus on their “family unit”, which is students who are grouped together based upon their residence hall assignments.

In addition, we recognize that the situations created by COVID-19, the necessary changes this semester and the general concerns related to health may add to existing stress. With that in mind, we are augmenting our counseling services with additional counselors and tele-counseling programs.