Spring 2021
Safe Return Plan
Spring 2021 Semester

Dear Worcester State Community,

Welcome back to the start of the Spring 2021 semester. As you know, we proactively moved the start of the spring semester, as outlined below, which is consistent with adjustments made at other universities in the Commonwealth. We believe these changes will ensure our ability to safely and successfully complete the spring semester.

Changes to the Spring 2021 semester
- Spring semester classes will begin Monday, February 1, 2021;
- Reading Day on May 4 and Professional Development Day on May 5, 2021 are both cancelled. Classes will be in session on these days/times as regularly scheduled;
- Spring break is eliminated. No classes will be held on Friday, March 19, 2021;
- May 10 through May 14 will be finals week, compressed from seven days into five days; and
- Classes and all learning activities will end on May 14, 2021.

Covid-19 Testing
The University will commence testing of all residential and commuter students with an in-person class, studio, or lab, prior to the start of the spring semester. The schedule for this testing will be announced early next month.

Updates to Spring Semester Calendar
The Spring 2021 calendar will be updated on the website by the end of this week. Pertinent dates related to the adjusted Spring 2021 calendar include:

- Last day to add day courses: Feb. 8, 2021
- Last day to drop day courses: Feb. 16, 2021
- Last day to add/drop evening courses: Feb. 16, 2021
- Last day to withdraw from courses/school: April 2, 2021
- Last day to elect Pass/Fail status: April 9, 2021

Courses offered through the Division of Graduate & Continuing Education will follow this new academic calendar. This includes all evening/online continuing education and all graduate classes (exclusive of the courses in the 100% online accelerated Education Graduate Programs - AOP).

The delayed start to the spring semester necessitates shifts to many other aspects of our typical spring semester. Financial Aid refunds, for example, will be disbursed in accordance with the new spring semester start date. Separate communication to students, faculty, and staff will be emailed regularly with additional details. We continue to monitor infection rates, which could necessitate other changes as the semester proceeds. Students should check their email regularly to keep apprised of updates.
While this Spring opening has uncertainties given the changing trajectory of the coronavirus, we have one significant advantage as we return this winter – we now have a full semester of practical experience and informed practice in keeping our campus community healthy and safe. We expect to apply those lessons as we move forward in 2021.

We look forward to a day when we can put the coronavirus pandemic and the disruption to our lives behind us. The rollout of vaccines are great news. However, we know that the rollout of mass inoculations will take time. Until we have other directives, I continue to ask that we all exercise health and safety protocols outlined by the CDC, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and our local Departments of Public Health. This will certainly help us all to slow the spread of the virus on our campus and in our community.

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at presidentsoffice@worceser.edu. Stay healthy and be well!

Sincerely,

Barry M. Maloney,
President
Pillars of a Safe Campus Environment

Mutual Contract of Social Responsibility
Because Worcester State University cannot guarantee zero cases, nor prevent all community infections, we must expect that every member of the University community will be committed to creating a culture of safety and accountability to maintain a healthy campus. Everyone who comes to campus for classes and work must understand and acknowledge this reality. Every member of the Worcester State community must also acknowledge that they have a responsibility to themselves and their fellow Lancers to do their part to be safe, honor restrictions, follow appropriate public health guidelines, including those from the Centers for Disease Control, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Worcester city Department of Health, and comply with all written University guidance posted or otherwise communicated to the campus community.

So that we may create a culture of safety and accountability throughout the Worcester State University community, every member of our community is expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Participate in training exercises to learn the required safety practices and navigate the new normal on campus;
- Self-monitor for and report all COVID-19 symptoms using the CoVerified app;
- Practice essential personal safety practices, including wearing appropriate face coverings; washing hands frequently; using sanitizer; abiding by safe social distancing practices; and following all safety instructions and signage;
- Ensure that all personal belongings and all living, studying, and working spaces are kept clean; and
- Participate in testing and contact tracing under prescribed protocols designated by the University and public health officials.

The key pillars to maintaining a safe and healthy campus, and fulfilling our mutual social responsibility to all in the Worcester State community, are articulated below.

- **Social Distancing and Face Coverings/Masks**
  - When possible, keep six feet of distance between you and someone else.
  - Individuals will be required to wear face coverings on Worcester State grounds and in Worcester State buildings.
  - Failure to comply will violate the mutual contract of social responsibility.
  - Refusal to comply may result in immediate removal from campus, exclusion from campus, and/or other disciplinary action.
  - Facilities staff, University Police, and other designated employees will have the option to use N95 face masks to be provided by Worcester State.
  - Disposable face masks will be readily available at key distribution centers across campus for individuals who forget face covering. Locations include the Information Desk located in the Student Center and the Office of Residence Life and House located in Sheehan Hall.
Protective Face Covering/Gear Inventory
Worcester State has purchased supplies of protective face covering/gear for students and all employees. Supplies include various types of face covering/masks, face shields and gloves.

Building Access & Traffic Flow

Building Access
All buildings on campus now have designated entrances and exits, which have been clearly marked. The following document provides diagrams of those designations:

Building Flow Maps (Entrances & Exits)
Note: in the event of an emergency which requires evacuation of a building, any door may be used as an exit.

Traffic Flow
To keep pedestrian traffic as socially distant as possible, please keep to the right in corridors and stairwells.

Physical Barriers and Guides
Worcester State installed plexiglass or similar barriers in areas where close contact will occur (e.g., front, public-facing desks, and reception areas).

Hygiene Protocols
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “regular hand washing is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others.”
The University will—
- Promote handwashing and/or sanitizing, consistent with CDC guidance.
- Provide employees and students with supplies and standards for sanitizing personal work areas, workstations, desks, lecterns, plexiglass, and similar high-touch surfaces.

Cleaning and Disinfecting
The University has:
- Provided additional equipment for Facilities’ use in daily sanitizing activities.
- Provided additional materials and disinfecting solutions for employees to use for self-performing sanitizing in both instructional and personal use spaces.
- Established daily sanitizing protocols for all campus physical spaces.

Cleaning/Sanitation After Confirmed COVID-19 Case(s)
- Worcester State will follow CDC guidelines on cleaning and sanitation for confirmed cases of COVID-19. The following steps will occur once campus contact tracing efforts have identified affected campus spaces:
  - Campus offices, classrooms, and enclosed common spaces will come offline for at least 24 hours from the time a positive individual last occupied the space(s).
Appropriate signage will be placed on exterior offices/classrooms/lab doors alerting the space is closed until further notice. Area is to remain locked for the aforementioned timeframe to begin the cleaning and sanitation process.

Normal operations can resume once cleaning and sanitation procedures are complete. Occupants will receive notification when the area is ready for use.

Separate cleaning and sanitation protocols have been established for the residence halls and on-campus quarantine and isolation areas. Local public health officials may adjust closing time frames for campus locations on a case-by-case basis.

Testing and Contact Tracing

Information About COVID-19 Testing
Along with many colleges and universities across the commonwealth, Worcester State has contracted with the Broad Institute, a biomedical and genomic research center with a well-utilized COVID-19 diagnostic lab, founded in conjunction with Harvard University and MIT. Broad Institute uses the PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) test for the active presence of the COVID-19 virus, also known as a "point in time" test. In addition to this testing program, Worcester State will manage the COVID-19 virus daily via self-checks of its campus population of symptoms facilitated by a mobile application (CoVerified), testing, contact tracing, and isolation and quarantine protocols. These measures are in line with guidelines set by local, state, and federal health and higher education officials for campus re-openings.

As part of the Worcester State University Safe Return to Campus Spring 2021 Plan, and to promote the safety of the Worcester State community, all residential students, as well as commuter students, faculty, and staff will be required to participate in a scheduled COVID-19 surveillance testing program.

All community members who are part of the required testing groups have begun their testing the last week of January. Commuter students must receive a negative test result prior to coming to campus for the first week of classes and weekly throughout the semester. Results are expected within 24 hours of receipt of test samples at Broad Laboratory in Cambridge. Residential students should plan to test upon arrival to campus and self-quarantine in their bedrooms until they receive a negative result. Residential students are required to complete a second COVID test within 3 to 5 calendar days after the first test and weekly thereafter. Move-in is scheduled to begin on Jan. 28, 2021. Faculty, staff and students also have the option to return to campus with a negative result in hand, from an FDA EUA-approved molecular (PCR) SARS-CoV2 test that has been administered within 72 hours prior to arrival. These results must be presented upon arrival to campus at the WSU Testing Center.

Testing Process
Testing occurs on campus in Wasurey Hall (7 Hills Lounge) at no cost to participants. This Worcester State COVID-19 Testing Center is managed by a full-time staff person with a medical background. Please review the informational pamphlet and video below for more information on the observed self-swab nasal collection process. The test is self-administered, with a trained observer, and takes about three minutes. Results are expected within 24 hours of receipt at the diagnostic center.
**Test Participants (New information for Spring 2021)**
The following members of the Worcester State community are required to participate in the campus surveillance testing program on a weekly basis:

- All commuter students (undergraduate and graduate) attending in-person class/lab/studio on campus;
- All students living in the residence halls;
- Students engaged in on-site fieldwork, practicums, internships, clinical placements, research projects or student teaching;
- In season varsity athletes;
- Students participating in club sports;
- Students working on campus;
- Students and instructors in the Intensive English Language Institute (IELI);
- Faculty, staff and 03 contract employees with regular or periodic on-campus responsibilities as notified by Human Resources; and
- Worcester State community members identified as close contacts or classroom/lab/studio exposures through campus contact tracing efforts.

Testing frequencies may change based on community testing results and public health trends.

**Testing Center Schedule**

**Onboarding Testing Week**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Jan. 25</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Jan. 26</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Jan. 27</td>
<td>6:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Jan. 28</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Jan. 29</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</td>
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**Academic Calendar - Week One**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Jan. 31</td>
<td>1:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Feb. 2</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Feb. 3</td>
<td>6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Feb. 4</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Feb. 5</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.</td>
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**Academic Calendar - Weeks 2-14 (February 7- May 6)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>6:30a.m. – 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.</td>
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**Academic Calendar - Final Exams Week**

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.</td>
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Monday May 10  8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday May 11  8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Wednesday May 12  6:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Thursday May 13  8:00 a.m. - noon

The WSU Testing Center will close for holidays and weather-related emergencies.

**Test Results**
Test results, both positive and negative, for all testing participants will be provided to each test-taker through the HIPPA-compliant CoVerified app, which ensures the health information is secure.

Initially the test taker and Worcester State’s Student Health Services (SHS) will have access to the result. If the user’s test result is positive, a medical staff member in SHS will reach out to the user to offer support and review next steps, including campus contact tracing. The user may also be required to test again to confirm the positive result. Positive results are disclosed to others as required. For employees, this is Human Resources, and for everyone, the local public health departments and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health are notified. Supervisors, colleagues, and members of the Worcester State administration will not have access to health information. Faculty members will receive notification of the positive case in their class/lab/studio. Per federal privacy regulations (HIPPA and FERPA), the names of students who may be identified as positive for COVID-19, and those to be quarantined as close contacts of positive cases, must be kept confidential and cannot be disclosed to faculty or staff.

Those found to be positive for the virus will be required to isolate in their homes, apartments, or in designated campus housing for at least 10 days, the last three of which must be symptom-free. Prior to returning to campus activities, individuals will need clearance from their local Board of Health.

The Worcester State Health Services medical staff will work with the Worcester Department of Public Health to identify via contact tracing individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19. Students, faculty, and staff could be required to quarantine themselves for up to 14 days as directed by public health officials.

**Contact Tracing**
Worcester State’s Contact Tracing Team, in coordination with nurse practitioners in Student Health Services (SHS), will perform all campus contact tracing efforts. The medical staff in SHS will work with individuals who are positive for COVID-19 and develop the initial list of close contacts. The names will be assigned to a WSU contact tracer who will reach out to all campus community members identified as close contacts. During the interview, the contact tracer will cover a set of standard questions, review quarantine protocols, offer additional university support and arrange for on campus testing.

Worcester State will share information concerning contact tracing efforts and case management with the Worcester Department of Public Health and the Community
Tracing Collaborative (CTC) throughout the semester. A program to reach out to individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, and contacts of these individuals. This will help reduce the spread of the disease and ensure the individuals have the support they need to isolate or quarantine. The names of individuals who have tested positive are not released to their contacts.

**Containment**

**Healthy Campus**
Mandatory isolation or stay at home for symptomatic individuals (coughing, sneezing, fever, rashes or any symptoms).

**Self-quarantine/Isolation**
Due to the congregate nature of on campus learning, housing, and recreation, Worcester State has established a robust plan for self-quarantine/isolation, and contact tracing. If students or employees receive a positive test, self-quarantine/isolation space on campus will be offered with support provided throughout the quarantine/isolation duration. Off-campus students who choose to remain off campus during their quarantine/isolation will be provided support as needed.

Residents who are awaiting testing results must quarantine/self-isolate at their permanent off-campus residence, if feasible, or in their assigned space on campus, under the direction of SHS. Out-of-state and international students may require early move-in to complete a two-week quarantine.

**Glossary**

**CoVerified:** A free app for Android and iPhone that integrates with the Broad Institute's testing platform, and allows users to monitor symptoms and receive test results. See https://www.coverified.us/.

**Isolation:** The physical separation of people who have a contagious disease from people who do not have the disease.

**Quarantine:** The physical separation and restriction of movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease, for monitoring for development of illness.

**Surveillance Testing:** The monitoring of the current state of the epidemic of COVID-19. At Worcester State, the goal of surveillance testing is to quickly identify when/if the virus is present on campus and to minimize its further spread.

**Close Contact:** criteria for determining whether the contact with an infected individual warrants quarantine, based on proximity, length of time in contact, environment context (e.g., large room, outside), active symptoms of the infected person with whom contact is made.

**Communications**

The Office of Communications and Marketing (also known as MARCOM) will provide timely and accurate information concerning Worcester State University's updated Safe Return to Campus COVID-19 response plan. MARCOM will disseminate information to undergraduate and graduate students by email, text, or video, and
post on Worcester State’s Safe Return website and social media platforms. Campus messages will be sent from the WSU Communications and Marketing email account with additional messages from campus administration including the President’s Office, Provost Office, Student Affairs and Resident’s Life. Students are encouraged to check their WSU email account at least once a day to keep apprised of campus updates.

To keep everyone apprised of the health and safety of the campus community respective to the coronavirus pandemic, weekly campus-wide meetings will take place. The spring 2021 COVID-19 Weekly Briefing will be held each Friday morning at 9:30 a.m. beginning Friday, Jan. 29, 2021. The 30-minute meeting will include WSU’s COVID-19 dashboard updates and Q&As. FAQs from each briefing will be posted to the COVID-19 dashboard webpage. An email with a link to the meeting will be sent each Thursday evening and contain the latest dashboard updates.

In the event of a campus-wide emergency, communication will be disseminated via the RAVE Alert system. Information is located at https://www.worcester.edu/myWSU and clicking on the link for WSU Alert System to the right in the box labeled “Safety Communication.” There is also a link to the Rave Guardian website (http://www.raveguardian.com) to download the app.

Archived content from the fall 2020 Safe Return to Campus Plan and the Public Health Information websites will be accessible from the current Safe Return website. The Safe Return to Campus plan Spring 2021 will be updated on to a dedicated website (https://www.worcester.edu/Safe-Return/).

MARCOM will continue to:
• Coordinate with each Safe Return team leader to disseminate their content broadly across multiple mediums;
• Assess the current communication plan, make adjustments and share changes with the campus community;
• Share student communication with faculty and staff;
• Tell more stories about our campus community through stories posted on the WSU News feed;
• Increase of development of pandemic resiliency stories featuring Worcester State’s students, faculty, staff and alumni; and
• Post relevant updates related to changes in public health or state guidelines as it relates to WSU’s plans.

The Communications team, composed of strategy and production, meets regularly to review several topics and suggestions for awareness including the use of video content, increased distribution of student-written stories, podcasts, faculty, student, alumni and donor stories that promote COVID-19 resiliency, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Plans for the University’s Academic Program
The University’s priority is to provide a safe and equitable teaching and learning environment that will maximize student success in pursuit of their academic goals. This plan anticipates that Worcester State University will utilize a combination of face-to-face, blended, and online course delivery.

- **A Blended Opening**
  Worcester State University will open in-person for spring 2021 in accordance with its previously published academic calendar and with as many on-campus learning opportunities available to students as possible.

  Worcester State’s approach to education capitalizes on the faculty-to-student interaction and relationship, and students’ interaction through learning with each other. This has been our cornerstone since 1874 and with the advances to our current learning environment, we continue to explore unique, innovative ways to engage students. Still, this approach must recognize and plan for:
  - The health needs of students, faculty and staff.

  The University’s approach leverages blended and online learning both to de-densify classroom spaces and to accommodate student and faculty health needs as they may arise. In addition, we will be prepared to move academic programming to remote learning modalities, if and when public health developments so dictate.

  Spring 2021 classes will be delivered primarily in a blended format, except for those classes already designated to be delivered fully online. The University’s priority in course format is blended courses with in-person, synchronous sessions.

  Blended courses are offered in one of the following formats:
  - Synchronous delivery, whether partially in-person or streamed with video conferencing technology for students learning remotely; and
  - Asynchronous delivery. Online learning with priority given to blended courses with in-person synchronous sessions.

  With blended classes, between 25 percent and 99 percent of course activities could be completed virtually. Faculty and department chairs, in conjunction with their respective deans, will work together to identify the days when courses will take place on campus to ensure an equitable distribution of the number of in-person classes.

  With regard to students with accommodations approved by the University’s Office of Student Accessibility Services (SAS), a variety of approaches may be taken to ensure equitable learning environments. Such approaches were identified and cataloged last summer, in partnership with SAS.

  For faculty accommodations:
  - Faculty members have the option to teach fully online, with the approval of the department chair and dean, if the instructor is experienced in online
education, or as a reasonable accommodation when a qualifying condition is documented and approved through Human Resources.

- If a fully online teaching schedule is requested via HR, other accommodation methods (such as teaching remotely, wherein class meetings are held using Blackboard) will be offered.
- Faculty will be expected to teach in distance setting to the same high standards found in a classroom setting. Therefore, faculty will attend workshops or training sessions, or document their prior training, to meet the University’s academic standards in distance environment.

- **Campus Operating Status**
  A change in operations may occur when positive case numbers increase and/or external factors indicate a pivot would be in the best interest of health and safety of the campus community. Please refer to the Campus Operating Status located on the Safe Return webpage.

**Equity and Access to Learning**
While balancing campus safety and the goal of maximizing student success, it is vital that equity be a top priority, and that University continue to address issues of access as they may affect students with limited or no internet access.

Recognizing that the pandemic and its economic costs have disproportionately affected people of color, the University will:

- Consider how blended/online teaching modalities produce new kinds of inequities in access to digital technologies and off-campus learning environments.
- Commit resources to addressing those inequities. Digital and home-learning inequities during the ongoing pandemic represent an important retention concern for the institution, and a community imperative as an anchor of Worcester’s social fabric.
- Identify necessary resources, including:
  - Laptops for students who do not have them;
  - WiFi hotspots for those without internet access; and
  - Access to funding for any/all individual software needs that may arise as part of participating in blended and/or online courses.
  - Laptops are available to loan to students who need one to support their academic success. Students should apply for support from the Student Emergency Fund.
- Carefully calibrate eligibility for the Student Emergency Fund, or other newly identified funding, including in consideration of full-time or part-time status, financial aid status, etc.

**Technology**

- **University Learning Management System**
  To promote students’ ease of learning online and to assist the University in
maintaining compliance with applicable policy, procedures, and law, the University restates that Blackboard is its official Learning Management Software (LMS), supported by IT Services. Consequently, instructors of blended or online classes are strongly encouraged to utilize Blackboard as a course’s central LMS. This will ensure that faculty members have the support they need, that IT can safeguard the privacy of the platform, and that students are positioned to succeed in online learning. While it is not obligatory that instructors utilize an LMS in their face-to-face courses, it is encouraged that an up-to-date syllabus be provided on Blackboard at a minimum. Ongoing Blackboard training is available for faculty.

**Student Technology Considerations**
While the use of a standard LMS is one component of an equitable blended/online learning plan for optimizing student learning, the University understands that several additional considerations must also be kept in mind, notably that students must have access to suitable laptop computers and high-speed internet as essential to completing blended, online, and remote coursework. For spring 2021, Worcester State University has recommitted to its laptop requirement. Further, the University will support and assist students with internet access, both on campus and at their homes, where access is limited or not available.

**Space Planning**
In order to promote social distancing, Worcester State will limit the number of individuals in classrooms, offices, and buildings, as well as students assigned to residence halls and bathrooms. Capacity limits were determined using a formula that took into account the current occupancy and the recommended social distance per person. To this end, our facilities department has:

- Determined occupancy limits indicated with designated signage for:
  - All academic instructional and specialized instructional space.
  - All non-academic spaces.
  - Previously assigned communal spaces such as lounges, conference rooms, and convenience areas.
  - Elevator cabs.
- Evaluated pedestrian pathways for density, and affixed floor markings and signage.
- Upgraded HVAC systems to allow continuous air flow. All systems have been upgraded with MERV 13 rated filters.

New occupancy limits in each classroom and common areas have been posted and all students, faculty, and staff will be expected to respect those limits for the health and safety of our community.

- **First-Year Student Services**

  - “Becoming a Lancer”

As an extension of the Academic Advising support that was established last summer, the relationship between first-year students and the Academic Success Center continues throughout the academic year. During their first semester at Worcester State, first-year students remain connected with their assigned academic advisor in the ASC. Each week,
this academic advisor sends emails with dates, deadlines and information that is crucial for each first-year student to know and understand as they begin their college career. Specifically, to prepare for advising and registration for the spring semester, the ASC has hosted workshops to explain how to choose classes and register online. In addition, ASC academic advisors have reviewed fall grades along with the spring schedule to determine if first-year students are enrolled in the correct courses to be successful in their major and stay on track for graduation. Academic advisors will reach out to students and make suggestions for the schedule based on the outcome of the fall semester, and plans to do so again this spring for fall 2021.

In an effort to academically connect students with one another, the Academic Success Center established a new academic support program called Peer 2 Peer (P2P). Developed for students enrolled in online and blended courses where there may be less interaction with the instructor and fellow classmates, the program creates a structure to connect students with one another to review assignments, projects, and to study for exams. Peer 2 Peer matches students in small groups of 2-4 individuals who are in the same course and looking to meet in-person or remotely for study sessions or overall academic support. Once a match is made, the ASC notifies students of next steps, which include a review of Safe Return guidelines, options and resources to meet on campus or Zoom, and an overview of the Academic Integrity policy at WSU.

Link to request Peer 2 Peer: https://forms.gle/mZ8bcsvPKqa3d8su5

Already existing academic support programs such as the Writing Center, Math Center and Spanish Clinic are available remotely and provide an updated set of procedures at each of their sites. https://www.worcester.edu/Academic-Support-Services/
Math Center- https://www.worcester.edu/SP-Math-Center/
Spanish Clinic- https://www.worcester.edu/SP-Spanish-Clinic/
Writing Center- https://www.worcester.edu/SP-Writing-Center/

- **The Student Experience**
- **Residence Life**

Residence Life will model small communities or “households,” which are key components of our plan for living on campus. A household may consist of just one student in a single room, two students in a double room, or suitemates, or it may include others on one floor who share a common bathroom. Whatever the household’s makeup, students living in these defined spaces will be expected to live together in new ways. They must exercise careful control of how shared spaces are used and maintained, and everything from bathroom use to household cleaning to shared elevator use must be scheduled and coordinated. Students on floors with common bathrooms will be given daily schedules for bathroom use that will limit the number of students in a common bathroom at one time. Common bathrooms will receive frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces by our facilities staff, and each bathroom in apartments and suites will receive a starter kit of disinfecting products for students to wipe down surfaces before and after use.

Residence hall bed counts have been carefully reviewed and adjusted to reduce
density. Some returning students may be impacted by the adjustment to the density of on-campus housing.

Students living in apartments and suites with in-unit bathrooms typically arrange bathroom schedules to manage individual use, and this fall will be no different. Upon arrival, apartment and suite “households” will be asked to support each other and develop bathroom use and cleaning schedules.

The University has set aside student housing that will serve as quarantine and isolation accommodations for residential students. Residential students required to stay in one of these spaces will be supported with meals delivered by on-campus dining services and daily health monitoring by Student Health Services.

- **Food Service**

  Worcester State’s food service vendor, Chartwells, has developed a COVID-19 specific and customized plan called *Path to Open* based on CDC, local and state guidelines. Plans include:

  - Reduced or eliminated guest seating capacity based on social distancing guidelines in all locations. Sheehan main dining hall will be reduced from 620 to 208 seats for in-person dining;
  - Installation of plexiglass at all dining locations;
  - Signage indicating customer pathways and floor queuing decals, as needed;
  - Online/remote ordering to allow customers to place a to-go order ahead of time;
  - Option for grab-and-go items at food service locations;
  - Establishment, with Residence Life, of household dining times;
  - A designated COVID-19 food safety manager;
  - Delivery process for residential students in isolation or quarantine;
  - Contactless catering and check in process; and
  - Enhanced safety protocols for food services employees, dining locations, and guests (if permitted).

  Outside guests will not be permitted to dine in the dining hall.

- **Library Services**

  The Library has adjusted in-person and remote services in conjunction with the University’s Safe Return to Campus Spring 2021 Plan. The Library, as well as the Learning Resource Center building, is open to current students, faculty, and staff only. A valid OneCard ID will be required to access the building during regular hours of operation, which are Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. See [the Library’s Safe Return to Campus guide](#) for an up-to-date summary of Library services.

- **Learning Location Spaces**

  To provide students with quiet and safe study spaces during this unique semester, Worcester State University has designated two spaces on campus as Learning Locations:
The Lancer Landing room in the Student Center, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Room L-236 in the Learning Resource Center, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
These spaces will provide a space for students to complete coursework and/or participate in online classes. Other quiet and safe spaces exist in other locations on-campus. The aforementioned spaces are purposefully provided for course and/or study purposes.

**Athletics**
No formal decision has been announced regarding formal competitive activities for the spring. Small group practices and conditioning activities may be held based upon public health guidelines and training requirements of individual coaches. Updated information with regard to team activities will be provided through the Athletics Department.

**Health Monitoring**
**Department of Student Health Services (SHS)**
As the primary source of medical care for students on campus, Student Health Services has prepared a detailed report on what is required for a safe return to this campus. This includes a list of necessary supplies, staffing, and physical considerations of current office space. The report also includes recommendations for isolation and quarantine spaces as outlined by the American College Health Association. SHS is benefited by having a long-term director and a strong relationship with the Worcester Department of Public Health.
SHS will be the primary contact for the receipt and dissemination of information related to a reported COVID-19 positive cases on campus. SHS will follow established protocols and guidelines for contact tracing, testing, and reporting, and will work with the Office of Communications and Marketing should information need to be shared with the campus community.

**Student Wellbeing and Mental Health**
The University has a long-standing commitment to the wellbeing and mental health of its students. This has included being a JED campus, through which Worcester State has enhanced its mental health outreach, programs, and protocols; and established a Worcester State JED team.
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University and its Counseling Services have emphasized several elements of its JED strategic plan to meet the diverse mental health needs of our students during these times, and to ensure a culture of care relative to mental health and wellbeing campus wide. This focus serves to increase help-seeking behaviors, access to care, supporting students in transition, social connectedness, gatekeeper training, and aid with identifying students at risk.

**Training**
The University increased mental health and wellbeing gatekeeper training through educating its faculty, staff, and students in recognizing, responding, and referring students in distress. These trainings include Resident Assistants (who live in the residence halls) as well as members of the athletic department coaching staff and trainers. These trainings, facilitated
by counseling center staff with a trauma informed focus, are informed by data specific to the
Worcester State student population and nationally. The training will further focus on
understanding referral protocols for both emergent and non-emergent scenarios.

**First-Year Student Support**
First-year students will continue to be supported in their transition to Worcester State in a
number of ways. EVERFI Mental Health and Diversity and Inclusion modules have been
added to the already existing AlcoholEDU, sexual violence, and prescription drug pre-
matriculation programs. These online programs were introduced sequentially to first year
students beginning last August. Virtual new student and parent orientation programs will
include an increased presence of information relating to transition, self-care, and information
on how to access campus mental health resources and supports. These programs will also
serve to connect students in an effort to develop a sense of community and belonging in
these difficult times.

**Outreach Efforts**
Counseling Services will continue mental health outreach efforts to both new and returning
students. In an effort to meet the diverse needs of our students, Counseling Services will
offer individual counseling sessions via telehealth and some safe in-person sessions. In
collaboration with the Office of Communication and Marketing, Worcester State is developing
a wellness hub website which will soon be launched. All wellness-related resources will be
housed on this page. This will assist the University in communicating to both internal and
external community members Worcester State’s commitment to holistic education and
wellbeing.

**Campus Restrictions**

**Remote Work**
**Worcester State University Policy on Remote Work**
- Human Resources will extend the opportunity for staff to telework whenever possible.
- All meetings will continue to be held remotely until further notice.

**Restricted Visitor Access**
Residence Hall visiting rules have been restructured: In all campus residences, access to
rooms and living spaces is limited to on-campus residents only, at all times. Overnight guests
will not be permitted. This plan may be subject to change as conditions evolve and the
University receives further guidance from federal and state health officials.

Other visitors:
Vendors and other guests are expected to adhere to the WSU mutual contract of social
responsibility. This includes wearing face coverings at all times, and monitoring symptoms
prior to visiting campus.
Please make arrangements with the office you will be visiting prior to arriving on campus.
Non-essential, in-person visits are discouraged.

**Wellness Center**
For the Spring 2021 semester, access to the Wellness Center is limited to students and
certain individuals who are associated with activities approved by the Campus Usage
Committee. Students are prohibited from sponsoring a guest in the Wellness Center or its
fitness facilities.
A detailed operations plan outlines the daily cleaning procedures and safety protocols for employees and students. Wellness Center staff will continue to offer a blended approach, with virtual and in-person programs and services. The virtual classes are open to any member of the Worcester State community.

**Campus Events**

One of the many changes implemented to address the health and safety of our faculty, staff and students is creation of the Campus Usage Committee.

**Scope and Objective**

The Campus Usage Committee will evaluate all space requests and event proposals which include or involve external participants (defined as individuals who are not current Worcester State faculty, staff, or students), provided the space request or event proposal is scheduled to occur on property owned or operated by Worcester State University.

These requests may originate from external parties seeking to utilize Worcester State facilities (e.g., external conferences or sports camp), or internal departments who plan to interact with external participants on campus. Please note, there are several types of event proposals/space requests that the Campus Usage Committee is not required to review. Examples include:

- Department return to campus plans (unless the department plans include the involvement of external participants);
- Construction/external contractor projects;
- Space or event requests involving Worcester State faculty, staff, or students only (either on or off campus); and
- Research projects involving Worcester State faculty, staff, or students only.

The primary objective of the Campus Usage Committee is to ensure event plans are in compliance with current health and safety guidance from the State of Massachusetts, event plans are in compliance with the Worcester State Safe Return to Campus plan, and the proposed event does not pose an unnecessary health or safety risk to Worcester State faculty, staff, students, or event participants.

For additional information regarding event planning and reserving physical space for an event, please visit the Conference & Event Services pages.

**Process**

If you have an event proposal/space request, please:

- Complete the event proposal template
- Ensure the proposal form is formally reviewed and approved by the division head. Please note, formal approval is obtained via a physical wet signature on the form (scanned), or email trail showing review and approval by the division head.
- Ensure the approved proposal is submitted to Jonathan Walker (jwalker@worcester.edu), at least 10 days prior to the start date of the event.
- The proposal will be evaluated by the Campus Usage Committee. Please note, the Campus Usage Committee may request additional information regarding the proposal.
- The Campus Usage Committee will notify the proposer and division head of the results of the evaluation. If approved, the Campus Usage Committee will also notify key campus offices of the upcoming approved event.
- The chair of the Campus Usage Committee will provide a summary of events to the Cabinet.

**The Committee**

Adrian Gage, Assistant Dean, Residence Life and Housing
Tara Hancock, Executive Director, Alumni
Mike McKenna, Director, Conference and Event Services
Amie Hamel, Facilities
Hilda Ramirez, Executive Director, Latino Education Institute
Jonathan Walker, Director, Internal Controls and Risk Assessment

Questions should be directed to Jonathan Walker (jwalker@worcester.edu)

Limit on Non-Essential Travel
In light of health and safety concerns, and to aid with cost containment, the University has suspended all travel, both in- and out-of-state, through the academic year, 2020-2021. This includes the suspension of all international travel, including planned study abroad programming.

There will be very limited exceptions made to meet University operating requirements. Exceptions require preparation of a detailed travel plan subject to review by the administration to determine if it is appropriate and necessary.

Shuttle to Goddard Lot and Sagamore Road Studios
The shuttle will not run between Goddard Lot and the University for the spring semester. The shuttle will run between campus and the Sagamore Road Studios.

Limited Access to Communal Social Spaces
To comply with social distancing guidelines, all shared communal spaces on campus will be closed or have reduced density. Use of pool tables, gaming consoles, and other areas within the residence halls and Student Center will likely not be available for use in the spring.

Gatherings in lounges and other informal spaces may be limited to no more than 10 people, and some even less, based on square footage. Signs will be posted at the entrance of each communal space and it will be expected that students maintain physical distancing at all times and wear a face covering over the nose, mouth, and chin. Furniture will be marked to identify where people can sit to comply with social distancing guidelines. Additionally, conference rooms not otherwise converted to instructional space will either be closed to use or be restricted to meet social distancing guidelines. All such spaces will be signed with applicable limitations.

Mandatory Training and Compliance
Human Resources will provide instructions for mandatory training on health and safety, and new campus protocols before employees return to campus. Training will be personalized to include our student leaders and human resources personnel reviewing content and/or narrating material. Essential health and safety content will include:

- Face coverings
- Frequent hand washing and sanitizing
- Social distancing/elevator occupancy
- Safe Return to Campus website for reference
- Campus cleaning protocols
- What to do if you get sick
- Upon Return to Campus – what to do
- Importance of mutual shared responsibility

Public Health Information
While the focus of efforts has turned to a safe return to on-campus instruction and activities in accordance with our plan, we will continue to provide public health information related to the pandemic to our community.

Frequently Asked Questions
The Safe Return to Campus Spring 2021 plan is responsive to both state and federal guidelines. These Frequently Asked Questions will be updated and expanded on an ongoing
basis, and will provide information to all constituents of our community - students, faculty, and staff.