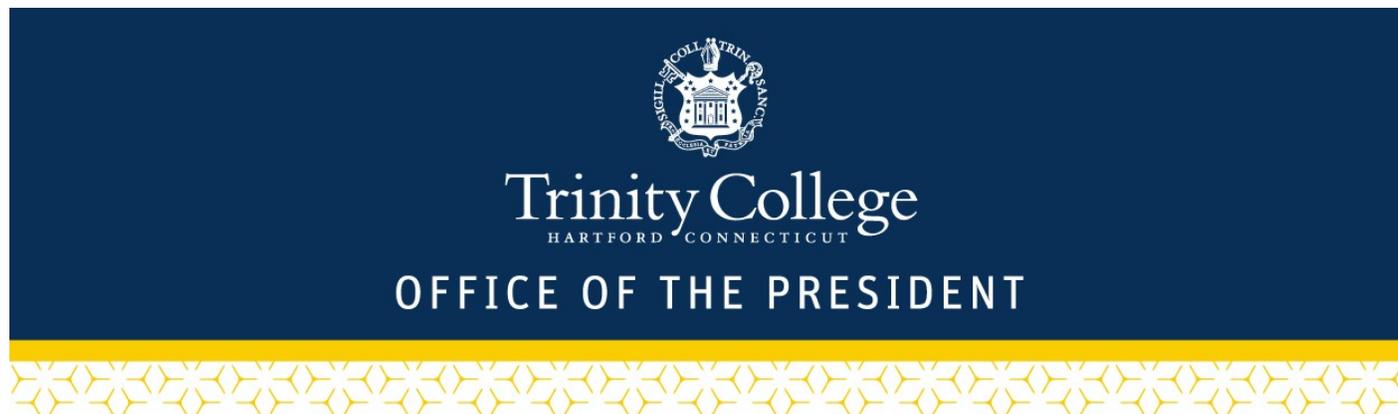


An Update on Planning for the Fall

President Joanne Berger-Sweeney <President@trincoll.edu>

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To: President Joanne Berger-Sweeney <President@trincoll.edu>



May 13, 2020

Dear Trinity College Community Members,

Another semester at Trinity College is almost finished. But no one will count spring 2020 as an ordinary semester. I know that it hasn't been easy for any of us, and I am deeply grateful to our entire community for its flexibility, creativity, dedication, resilience, and the collective can-do spirit that has gotten us through this semester. Thank you to each and every one of you who helped make this happen! To our graduating students: We look forward to celebrating you—and Trinity's 197th birthday—during our virtual Baccalaureate on Saturday, May 16, and in our tribute to you on Sunday. We also look forward to seeing you back on campus for your face-to-face Commencement next year.

Endings and beginnings

As we end one semester, I'm writing today to share an update on our planning to begin in the fall and, importantly, to make you aware of ways in which you can continue to participate in and have an impact on that planning. Here are some fundamentals about our planning for the fall semester.

First: We continue to be guided by our mission to prepare students to be "bold, independent thinkers who lead transformative lives." Attending to our educational mission while ensuring to the best of our ability the health and well-being of *all* members of our campus community is essential.

Second: We are currently planning to have students on campus in the fall, but we are preparing for remote learning options as well. Exactly what the fall semester will look like—when we will begin and when we will end, how many students can be on campus and how many will be learning remotely—we simply don't know yet. We will follow public health

guidelines when we reopen (see the next section), which likely will lead to changes in the academic calendar, as repopulation of the campus likely will be phased, with fewer students on campus in the fall. We will need to be flexible and creative.

Third: We welcome your input, your ideas, and your partnership in this planning. Many of you are deeply engaged already and spending many hours a week in service to planning groups of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), in the academic planning that's happening among a number of faculty groups, or in consultation on budget-related matters as part of the Planning and Budget Council, staff councils, and other groups. We invite input from the community beyond those groups, and later in this letter I'll speak to a couple of ways we will seek that input.

When will we reopen? How will we reopen?

As you may know, Governor Ned Lamont of Connecticut has created an advisory group on how to reopen the state for business, and its recommendations would allow some businesses to begin opening later this month. Please note that higher education is not part of the first phase of reopening; for the time being, Trinity will continue with remote learning and its current operational practices (with most staff working remotely). Governor Lamont appointed a subcommittee to determine criteria to assist institutions of higher education with planning how we will reopen. That subcommittee has issued a report with specific guidance for colleges and universities, including residential colleges such as ours. I encourage you to [read the report](#).

The report lays out a phased timeline for reopening that would allow students to begin returning to campus on September 1, 2020, if several "gating conditions" are met. For instance, hospitalizations from COVID-19 must continue to decline, area hospitals must have adequate surge capacity for a new spike in cases, and colleges must be able to test, monitor, and contain COVID-19 cases. *Assuming that all gating conditions are met, we will begin on-campus learning after September 1 and end before Thanksgiving to limit the number of times students depart and return to campus from travel or visits home.*

Additionally, the report asks all colleges and universities to develop and provide to the state specific plans for social distancing in classrooms, dining facilities, living spaces, etc. We also must ensure flexibility in our planning if we need to shut down due to resurgence of the disease.

These are important public health considerations, but we must consider many other factors in fulfilling our educational mission. We will need to offer some remote learning options because some students and faculty may be unable to be on campus. Travel restrictions, underlying health conditions, and social distancing requirements are a few considerations that will limit our ability to all be together. We therefore must focus on how we will create a high-quality, personalized, and rigorous educational experience with a compressed schedule. And if health and safety require it, we will need to be prepared to pivot again to fully remote learning.

This is challenging and once again will require flexibility, ingenuity, and creativity, but the Trinity community is up for the challenge. Here is how the planning will proceed.

Trinity's EOC is in the midst of detailed, comprehensive operational planning to prepare for the safest possible reopening. The EOC's planning, under the guidance of Dean of Campus Life and Vice President for Student Affairs Joe DiChristina, will provide the foundation for the reopening plans we must submit to the state. At the same time, Acting Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs Sonia Cardenas, working closely with the Curriculum Committee and the ad-hoc COVID-19 Academic Planning Committee, is guiding academic planning for the fall.

Timeline for finalizing plans for the fall

We know that we need to make decisions about the fall with enough time for families to plan and for the college to implement the decisions. Now that we have some specific guidance from the state—and a September 1 target date for a phased reopening—we will aim to recommend a plan for approval by the Board of Trustees to consider in June. We anticipate having more concrete plans for the fall to share with you in mid- to late June. We will share plans for winter and spring at a later date. We are committed to communicating with you frequently, as new information becomes available.

Financial impact of the crisis

This crisis will impact our finances for FY21; all of our revenue sources will be strained. I know many of you are anxious, wondering about how the financial impacts of the pandemic will affect you personally and the college more broadly. We will have to make some decisions in the coming weeks, but we have not made any decisions other than those we've already communicated. That's largely because we need to know more about how and when we will reopen in the fall before we can create a realistic annual budget.

One thing I know: The Trinity community is providing tremendous support already. We have been inspired by the rallying of our entire community in support of our students, and we are grateful to all who've stepped up during these uncertain times. My thanks go to all of you, including those who contributed generously during [Trinity's Giving Week](#), which focused on meeting the urgent financial needs of our students due to the pandemic.

In the meantime, Dan Hitchell, vice president of finance and chief financial officer, is working with his team and key governance groups, such as the President's Planning and Budget Council, to develop a realistic budget for the coming year. We expect to present a proposed FY21 budget to the trustees in June.

How can you share your input?

Our ears, our minds, and our hearts are open to suggestions as we navigate unprecedented change. Your input will continue to be incredibly valuable as we develop plans for the fall. To that end, we aim to survey various groups within the Trinity community about these plans in the coming days; we also have set up a general email address, PlansToReturn@trincoll.edu, to which we invite you to send any suggestions or ideas, large or small, for planning for the fall or managing through the pandemic more generally.

My hope

This is not a time for Trinity to merely get by, or for us to work in silos, or to think narrowly

about the implications of various scenarios. Rather, this is a time to put to use our training in the liberal arts: to collaborate, to look at wicked problems from all angles, to ask questions no one has asked, and to devise solutions that will move Trinity forward. We can do this together.

Sincerely,

Joanne Berger-Sweeney
President and Trinity College Professor of Neuroscience