

Preparing for the spring semester at Trinity College

Rojas, Jason <Jason.Rojas@trincoll.edu>

Fri 1/15/2021 12:42 PM

To: Rojas, Jason <Jason.Rojas@trincoll.edu>

January 15, 2020

Dear Students and Families,

We hope you are doing well and that you had a peaceful and happy holiday season, despite the tumultuous and challenging times in our world. As co-chairs of Trinity's COVID-19 steering committee, we're working with our committee colleagues and with others across the institution to prepare for the start of the spring semester. We look forward to having you back on campus as we continue our academic year. Your commitment to the health and safety of our campus community during the fall was critical to our completing the semester in person, and we expect that same level of commitment as we look ahead to the spring.

We write today with important information, particularly for those who are planning to return to campus in mid-February. Please take the time to read this message thoroughly and save it for future reference. It includes information on:

- Lessons learned from the fall
- Detailed information about move-in, including pre-arrival requirements
- Protocols for the spring

We aim to provide the fullest and most equitable educational experience possible for students while keeping the community safe and healthy. We are guided by science and by best practices for emergency preparedness, health and safety, and more, all in support of the college's enduring academic mission.

Flexibility, adaptability, and care for the community continue to be key principles to Trinity's success in managing this quickly evolving situation. Today, COVID-19 is surging in most places, with new, more contagious mutations that threaten to worsen the spread of the virus even as vaccines bring hope for an end to this now year-long pandemic. We are appreciative of the wisdom of our faculty in creating an academic calendar for 2020-21 that provided for a more gradual return to in-person learning in March the spring, so that we aren't asking students to move back to campus amid a post-holiday national surge in the virus.

Lessons from the Fall

Our experience from the fall helps guide our planning for the spring semester. For instance, in the fall, we saw no evidence of virus transmission in classrooms, and we know that faculty, staff, and students generally were diligent in following rules for physical distancing, mask-wearing, and hand-sanitizing. Where we saw spread of the virus most commonly was in residential situations, whether in off-campus apartments and houses or campus residences.

Trinity's investment in frequent surveillance testing of the entire campus community was the single biggest factor in our ability to manage the virus last fall. The vast majority of active cases we saw were asymptomatic, discovered through our campus testing center. With that data, we were able to isolate active cases and implement thorough contact tracing and quarantine protocols. It wasn't perfect, and we certainly saw more COVID-19 cases than many of our small college peers, but the preventative measures

we took and the management protocols we put in place for the fall worked and allowed us to complete the fall semester as planned. Thank you to all for your cooperation and partnership in this work.

Protocols and Details for the Spring

We will continue with twice weekly [PCR testing in our Ferris testing center](#) for all students who are living and/or studying on campus, as well as with weekly testing for staff, faculty, and affiliates on campus.

Following the January term, the academic calendar for the spring semester mirrors the fall's calendar; 13-week classes will begin remotely on February 8, and in-person classes for the spring semester begin March 1. Courses will again be offered as in-person, remote, or hybrid.

As we did in the fall, we will welcome as many as 1,700 students back to campus residences this spring, housed in individual bedrooms within a variety of campus housing types. As many as 200 others will live nearby in off-campus housing, and a smaller number will live at home and commute to classes on campus. All of those students—those planning to be on campus—need to complete a 10-day at-home quarantine and obtain a negative COVID-19 PCR test before returning to campus.

Quarantine means staying home—not leaving except for essential reasons (such as medical appointments)—and maintaining physical distance from others.

The pre-arrival test needs to be a [molecular PCR test, not a rapid antigen test](#), taken within seven days of your return to campus. There are many options for obtaining a test, including ordering by mail, but they require some checking of availability and guidelines in your area, as well as advance planning. We've provided here some [resources for obtaining a pre-arrival test](#). You'll need to share the results of your pre-arrival test results with the college by uploading them via the CoVerified App **before** you come to campus. Note that you may need to update or reinstall the app if you haven't used it in some time.

Move-in will occur Thursday, February 18, through Monday, February 22. Students should complete the [pre-arrival checklist](#) and [sign-up](#) for a move-in time slot before you come to campus (<https://moodle.trincoll.edu>). You can access the [checklist](#) and [sign-up](#) for your move-in time slot by using your Trinity College username and password (parents: please note this is a site that requires student login). Careful completion of each of these tasks before arrival is required. You will not be granted access to residential buildings or classes until you complete your check-in, move-in, and testing processes.

If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please remain at home and call the Health Center at 860-297-2018.

To help us maintain a safe number of people on campus, please do not arrive early and do not come to campus if you are not scheduled to do so. Contact housing@trincoll.edu for more information if you are not able to access [COVID-19 Onboarding Return To Campus](#) on Moodle.

Upon arrival, you should report first to the testing center in Ferris for your arrival PCR test. Then you'll check in and self-quarantine (with some exceptions, including to pick up meals and for COVID-19 testing) until you have received three negative test results through our campus testing center. We will begin our regular testing cadence (students being tested either Mondays/Thursdays or Tuesdays/Fridays) the week of February 22.

All students will be expected to abide by and will be held accountable to the rules in the student community responsibility agreement, which you will need to read and sign (again) before returning to campus.

What We Don't Know

The information here is preliminary, meant to help you plan for your return to campus this spring and to remind us all of the practices that can keep our community safe and healthy. We will provide more details and updated policies as we they're available. And some information will continue to evolve as local, state, and national guidance changes.

There is much we still don't and can't know. We don't know what the level of community spread of the virus will be through the spring and how that may affect travel and visitors to/from campus, for instance. We're encouraged by the progress of the state of Connecticut so far in distributing vaccines, but we don't yet know when vaccines will be available to members of our community, or how vaccinations and the availability and reliability of rapid testing might have an impact on event planning. Please know we are continually consulting with our healthcare partners at Hartford HealthCare, as well as with colleagues locally and at the state level, and we will keep you apprised as we learn more.

What's Next

We have updated our [COVID-19 website](#) and the [FAQs](#) there with information that is consistent with this message. We will share fuller details and roll out enhanced communications tools by early February.

Students who plan to live in campus housing can expect to hear more details from the housing office soon. And students will hear from us again on or about February 8, when you should be starting your at-home quarantine.

As we did before the start of the fall semester, we'll host informational virtual town halls for our community in early February. Watch for a separate invitation soon.

For specific questions not addressed here or on our website, please email planstoreturn@trincoll.edu. Please note that this email address is managed by colleagues in our communications office, who will do their best to find answers to your specific questions from various offices across the college.

Thank you for your continued partnership in this community-wide effort. We have confidence that during the spring semester, as with the fall semester, we will manage through this pandemic, work together to keep each other safe while we live and learn together as a Bantam community. We're looking forward to seeing folks back on campus in a few weeks.

Sincerely,

Joe DiChristina, Vice President for Student Success and Enrollment Management
Jason Rojas, Chief of Staff and Associate Vice President for External Relations