

Dean Sniegowski's Message to College Students on Fall 2020

Dear College Students,

This is Dean Paul Sniegowski, reaching out on behalf of the faculty and staff of the College with a personal message for fall 2020 to new and returning students. In this message, I'd like to offer you some guidance on what to expect this fall and to remind you of key resources as you plan for the new school year. Most importantly, I want to convey how much all of us here in the College look forward to sharing the vibrant and intellectually stimulating life of our great university with you this coming year.

As indicated in President Gutmann's recent message to the Penn community, the University of Pennsylvania will be open this fall, with some undergraduate students living in the College House system and others living in nearby housing in Philadelphia or participating online from remote locations. I want you to know that the College is deeply engaged this summer in preparations to deliver a robust, high-quality educational experience for you in the fall. Instructors are working to provide live, interactive discussions in all courses, whether online or in-person. Because of COVID-19 physical distancing precautions, large class meetings will need to be conducted online. Small class meetings will be conducted online or in-person, depending on instructor discretion and room availability. Importantly, in-person, for-credit independent study research opportunities for undergraduate students—one of the real hallmarks of a College education at Penn—will be available as physical distancing and public health precautions allow.

Our returning students know that some grading policies and deadlines were altered in spring 2020 due to the unanticipated move-out caused by the pandemic. I want you all to be aware that this fall, academic policies and deadlines regarding grading and course registration (Add, Drop, Withdrawal, and Pass/Fail) will return to those in effect during normal residential semesters.

Though COVID-19 has forced us to make some changes in how we carry out our missions of teaching and research this fall, the community spirit of shared inquiry into understanding ourselves, each other, our world, and our universe is alive and well here at Penn. We look forward to renewing that spirit again this fall with all of you—new and returning students—as we have done now for over two hundred fifty years.

If you are thinking of taking an academic leave of absence this coming year, you will want to take into account the impact of time away on your academic progress as well as the alternative plans that are realistically available to you should you step aside from your education at this time. If you are considering a leave, you should get in touch personally with your College Contact Advisor (listed on your personal Penn InTouch page) in the College Office to have a one-on-one conversation. And make a point, too, to talk about this with your parents or guardians, peers, and other important individuals in your life. All of them can help you get a sense of whether a leave is the right choice for you.

I know that that this message will not necessarily answer all of the questions you may have about the fall and the coming school year. Both the University and The College Office have set up information pages with FAQs that can help with many such questions, but please remember that the advisors in the College Office, your pre-major advisor, and your major advisor are all there to provide personal conversations and help. Don't hesitate to connect with them should you have questions or just want to talk with them about the coming year in the College.

Above all, all of us in the College wish you and yours a peaceful and healthy summer. We will continue to be in touch with further information as the summer progresses.