



March 11, 2021

Dear Faculty, Staff, Students, and Families,

It's now been a full year that our community has been directly impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic, and we write to you today to provide an update on the University's plans for the fall 2021 semester.

Due in large measure to the steadfast commitment of our students, faculty, and staff to our essential safety protocols, we had a full in-person fall semester. Through continued vigilance, we remain on track to continue that success during the spring semester.

We know many of you already have questions about our plans for fall of 2021. The University intends to provide an in-person, residential education for the 2021–22 academic year. Programs within the School of Professional & Continuing Studies that offer remote and blended formats will continue as usual. Otherwise, we are optimistic, contingent on evolving health circumstances, that students and faculty will be able to return to fully in-person learning.

## **IN-PERSON, RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION**

Our approach, as it has been from the beginning, is to provide an outstanding residential academic experience for our students while mitigating the risk of COVID-19 to our campus community. We are confident that all of us will continue to do what is necessary to support a safe fall 2021 semester, just as we have been doing. Students are already in the process of making housing arrangements, and the advising period for fall course selection for traditional undergraduates will begin later this month. The University will continue to monitor public health conditions and provide information about the fall semester.

## **VACCINES**

Increasing availability of vaccines across the nation, within Virginia, and in our community is welcome news and very positive. We strongly encourage all faculty, staff, and students to get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as you are able to do so. If you have not done so already, you may pre-register for a vaccine in Virginia using this link.

To continue to protect yourself and others, those who have already been vaccinated must continue to follow the University's health and safety protocols, including wearing a mask and maintaining 6 feet of physical distance. We will continue to require prevalence testing for all undergraduate students taking classes in person this spring, even if they have been fully vaccinated. This vaccine

FAQ on the CDC website provides additional information on how you can continue to protect the Spider community after you have been vaccinated.

We have made clear to the Virginia Department of Health our strong desire to operate a vaccination clinic on our campus. At this time, we have no certainty that VDH is going to allocate vaccines to the University; however, we are proactively identifying and procuring the resources necessary to stand up a clinic so that we are ready if VDH allocates vaccines to the University during Phase 1c of the vaccine program. We will continue to keep you posted about what we learn related to the vaccine distribution process and availability.

We are carefully monitoring the evolving public health guidance and the rollout of the vaccine to determine what health and safety protocols may be necessary for the fall semester. We will also maintain our Physical Distancing Framework to guide the appropriate operating status for the campus based on conditions at the time and will communicate in advance of any change in our operating stage.

We will continue to update you about plans for the fall semester, including expectations for staff regarding our transition from remote to full on-campus operations, as we learn more. Thank you in advance as we continue to work together to ensure the safe progression of our spring term on campus and look ahead to a more familiar future.

Take care and be well.

Sincerely,

**Jeffrey Legro**

Executive Vice President and Provost

**David Hale**

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

**Steve Bisese**

Vice President for Student Development