

UMES
News <umesnews@umes.edu>
to bcc: umesstudents, bcc: Exchange

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UMES Student Return to Campus Planning Fall 20

Dear Hawks:

Summer is here, and it means one thing – despite all of the challenges presented by an unpredictable 2020, you have persevered and earned a well-deserved summer vacation. If there is one thing that I've learned over the past few months, it's to enjoy the gift of life, the treasure of friendships, and the blessing of family and loved ones. Whatever you do this summer, be sure to *Carpe Diem* – Seize the Day!

As you begin to execute your plans for the Summer, I am writing to provide insight into our reopening plans for the Fall 2020 semester. While we will continue to send you messages throughout the remainder of the Summer, I want to take a moment to address a few pressing topics that I know are on your mind.

Are we coming back to campus?

- The simple answer is – YES.

First and foremost, please know, health and safety is our highest priority. As a result, UMES has invested a lot of financial resources and strategic planning into new safety equipment and protocols designed to keep you and your community safe upon your return.

A sample of the new practices include:

- Providing UMES issued masks to all students
- Mandating mask-wearing in classroom, public, and group gatherings
- Installing hand sanitizers in various locations to include all buildings and residence halls
- Lowering density in all housing, classes and meeting areas
- Using new disinfectants meeting or exceeding the EPA's criteria for use against the COVID-19 virus
- Requiring temperature checks and symptom screening as needed
- Mandating physical distancing in all settings and events
- Modifying intramural sports
- Modifying in-person dining accommodations, etc.

As much as possible, UMES will implement practices that are designed to minimize risk while maximizing your student experience during the Fall 2020 semester. In the upcoming weeks, President Anderson, along with your newly elected SGA leaders, will host a virtual town hall meeting to address your thoughts about the upcoming semester. There will be an opportunity for you to submit direct questions ahead of time and have

your questions highlighted and answered as best as we can. Be sure to pay attention and watch for this announcement.

When will classes begin?

- July 20, 2020 – Pharmacy Program
- August 10, 2020 – ALL Undergraduate and Graduate programs
- August 31, 2020 – Physician Assistant and Physical Therapy Programs

For the majority of the campus, classes will begin on **Monday, August 10, 2020, and conclude with the last day of classes on Friday, November 13, 2020**. In essence, we have moved the semester up by three weeks.

Beginning early and concluding before Thanksgiving allows UMES to do three important things: 1. keep the academic semester intact, 2. be flexible in case of a second wave of the COVID-19 virus, and 3. limit any potential risk of exposure that may result from holiday travel during the Thanksgiving season. Once fall classes conclude, we'll see you in 2021.

As you can imagine, classes will also be modified in the coming semester to incorporate the new world challenges that we face together. Some changes include the use of masks in classrooms, the wiping down of desks before utilization, incorporating hybrid learning (combination of in-person and online sessions) when possible, and a host of other changes. More information will be shared with you regarding classroom modifications as we get closer to the beginning of the Fall semester to assist in your preparation.

Also, in the upcoming days, the Fall 2020 academic calendar will be posted and emailed to all students. The calendar will include important dates and deadlines such as the Add/Drop period, Drop for Non-Payment, Mid-terms, Finals, and Fall Commencement. Be sure to check your email regularly for these important updates.

Will we have an In-Person Commencement?

- Right now the plan is YES.

Due to the progress seen nationally and in the state of Maryland with the spread and containment of the COVID-19 virus, our current plan is to host a commencement ceremony for our degree candidates at the conclusion of the semester in November. The ceremony is being planned in accordance with CDC and Maryland State health guidelines to include limited attendance and social distancing as necessary. More information will be shared with students in the coming months to include both current students and our recent graduates from the May 2020 class. Be sure to check your email regularly for these critical updates.

What's going on with Housing?

- Simply stated – It's being modified to keep you safe.

ALL on-campus residential halls will adhere to CDC guidelines regarding social distancing to minimize risk with the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As a result, UMES is suspending double bed occupancy rooms. What does that mean?

It means each student will have their own bedroom for the Fall 2020 semester. Housing assignments are currently being reviewed to accommodate this new health and safety requirement, and residents will be contacted accordingly as to their potential new assignments, if any. If students are not comfortable with their housing assignments, they will be afforded an opportunity to be released from their housing contracts.

A word of caution – housing is limited due to capacity, current student enrollment, and new social distance guidelines for your health and safety. It is imperative that ***if*** you intend to live on campus during the Fall 2020 semester, that you complete your housing contract ***immediately*** to secure your reservation. If you relinquish your housing spot, there is no guarantee that you will be able to regain your place if you change your mind at a later date. The [Office of Residence Life](#) is prepared to work with all students as necessary.

Questions regarding housing should be directed to the Office of Residence Life at 410-651-6144 or email reslife@umes.edu.

What if I need financial assistance for the Fall 2020 semester?

- First and foremost, please file your [FASFA](#) immediately.

There are limited financial resources available to aid students in need. However, you will ***not*** be eligible for these funds unless you are currently enrolled for the Fall 2020 term.

In simpler terms, you need to be currently registered in order to be considered for financial support.

Lastly, the university has a plethora of funding opportunities that go unused each year by students. PLEASE APPLY for [Scholarships](#) and [Grants](#) through [UMES' Financial Aid](#) Office. These opportunities are just waiting for you to apply.

In closing, I know we've covered a lot in this email, but I hope you can appreciate the necessity of providing you with as much information as possible. Please remember, the best student is often the most informed student, so be on the lookout for our virtual student town hall meeting and join us if you can. As always, please send all questions and or comments to emse@umes.edu. We would love to hear from you.

Remember, stay positive, stay informed, act responsibly, and, most of all, stay safe.

Sincerely,

Hans Cooper

Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Experience