



Susan M. Collins • Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

## MEMO

TO: Mark S. Schlissel  
FROM: Susan M. Collins & Martino Harmon  
DATE: November 2, 2020  
SUBJECT: Winter 2021 Recommendations: Discussion Outline

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As background, we have sent you the near-final draft Report from the Provost's Winter 2021 Coordinating Committee, that includes materials from Student Life. Key inputs from our public health experts are not included in this document. Our teams have done excellent work, in a relatively short timeframe. This includes a helpful discussion of lessons – what went well and what did not. We remained engaged with them throughout the process and find the Report informative and very thoughtful.

While we accept many of the recommendations in the Report, additional input from our public health experts, and concerns expressed by our Board, lead us to a more conservative approach regarding the density of our residence halls and the amount of in-person instruction for our undergraduates.

Here are the key features of our recommendations for the Winter 2021 semester:

- Significantly expanded testing protocols will be important to support success. (The new testing protocols are described elsewhere.)
- Continue the *current* approach to instruction (i.e., the one in place as the semester draws to a close) – with mostly remote instruction and limited in-person classes. We expect hybrid courses to be considerably more limited as well, given what we have learned about difficulties in teaching them. We recognize that, overall, this will result in an instructional portfolio with more remote instruction than was anticipated for the fall semester – especially for our undergraduate programs.
  - Prioritize in-person instruction for those classes most important to teach in that modality, as determined by program leadership and instructors.
    - Instructors will be able to deploy the medium they believe is most appropriate. Faculty and GSIs will be allowed to opt-in for in-person instruction but not be required to do so.
  - Minimize changes in instruction modalities: what is announced to students in November should be what is offered throughout the term, except in unusual circumstances.
- Focus on improving the experience for students, faculty and staff (virtual and in person) such as:
  - Add 2 'break days' with no classes into the semester.
    - Tentatively: each one mid-week, in separate weeks; this does not require moving Commencement.

- Clarify challenges of 'hyflex' instruction and recognize that many fewer faculty may choose this modality.
- During November – December (and beyond), continue to work on ways to improve the experience and enhance wellness within our community; see report for examples.
  - Explore opportunities to increase safe in-person opportunities for student engagement, as appropriate.
- Reduce density in undergraduate residence halls:
  - The Public Health rationale for reduced density for undergraduates recommends that students are housed in single rooms only, and targets a density of no more than 30% -- which would imply a cap of 3000 students (about half of our current density).
  - While we will limit the number undergraduates accommodated in our residence halls, we will continue our commitment to providing housing for those students with a need (international, socio-economic, technology limitations, safety).
  - More generally, we will implement this de-densification through an online request to 'opt-in to stay' process that also includes academic needs.
  - We will explicitly encourage all students whose programs do not require them to participate in in-person classes or activities to continue their academic studies from their permanent residence. We will also encourage students living off campus to stay in their permanent residences after break.
  - Students who choose to continue in the residence halls will have to agree to mandatory pre-arrival and weekly mandatory testing during the semester, and recognize that there will be a very low threshold for disciplinary action for violations of public health rules.
- Dining will continue to be "grab and go" options. (If appropriate, we will consider a dine-in option at a later date.)
- Enforcement protocols will be enhanced for students on and off campus.

SMC/MH/cmg