



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Summer 2020

Dear Blue Mountain College Students,

On March 6, the Friday before spring break, each of us departed from the campus eager to enjoy a much-needed holiday before returning ten days later to participate in all of the activities that signal the close of another academic year. None of us could have imagined that our return would be prolonged by a pandemic that has challenged us to find ways to function in what is being accurately described as the new normal. Much has changed because of the COVID-19 virus, but my purpose in writing to you today is not to lament the changes but to celebrate the things that have stayed the same.

1. Just as we have done 147 times before, this fall Blue Mountain College will welcome to her beautiful campus scores of new and returning students eager to resume their studies and begin the next chapter of their lives. Residence halls will open the weekend of August 8, and face-to-face classes will begin on August 11, one week earlier than originally planned (see the attached revised academic calendar for specific details). Starting earlier than usual affords us the opportunity to end earlier than usual, with final exams completed before the Thanksgiving holiday. With an additional six weeks between the fall and spring semesters, students will have the option of choosing from an expanded slate of winter session courses offered online. The fall will be holiday-free, but the time normally dedicated to Labor Day, fall break, and the first part of Thanksgiving week will be recouped during the extended time between semesters. Reducing time away from campus will hopefully minimize the potential for travel into areas where the virus may be highly active.
2. Just as always, Blue Mountain College remains committed to Christ-centered academic excellence—and we are prepared to exercise the innovation, creativity, and flexibility needed to uphold this commitment. Dubbed “Project Ready,” our strategy for delivering to our students the stellar education they have come to expect at BMC involves ensuring that every faculty member and every qualified full-time student has in hand on day one of class an iPad that will support quality teaching and learning regardless of the mode of delivery. The iPad, preloaded with Canvas, apps, and digital textbooks, will enhance face-to-face instruction, but it will also guarantee that we will be prepared if circumstances require us to shift to online learning. (See the attached press release for more details.)
3. The sense of community that has long defined our campus will be no less prevalent than it has ever been. Over the years, students arriving on campus have quickly discovered their place in the BMC family. Although the fall will require that we practice social distancing and the wearing of face masks, these stipulations will not prevent us from fostering a warm and nurturing environment. Working together, we can create the robust campus experience that we are accustomed to without jeopardizing the health and well-being of students, faculty, staff, and guests.

4. Our locale has long provided us with a sense of security—and for this blessing we are thankful. While no area is immune to the virus, our rural setting, combined with our enhanced efforts to comply with CDC and American College Health Association guidelines, will serve us well as we prioritize the safety and good health of our campus community. By faithfully implementing these guidelines and by cooperating with state and local health officials, we can continue to function, as we always have, in a safe and satisfying way. Since everyone plays a role in securing the safety of our campus, students will be asked to sign a “health contract,” confirming their commitment to abide by the guidelines which exist to keep us all safe. To guide the College as a whole through this “new normal,” all employees have access to *BMC 360: the COVID-19 Continuity Plan*, a plan developed by a task team of administrators, faculty, and staff. Here are a few of the BMC 360 safety measures we will be taking this fall:
 - Downsized group meetings: campus activities, ministry groups, student organizations, various meetings, fine arts audiences, and indoor sport fans will be limited in number based on the setting for appropriate social distancing.
 - Limited class sizes in rooms that allow proper social distancing
 - Regular deep cleaning of the campus by Service Master, including the service of a day porter to wipe down high-touch, high-traffic areas between classes, activities, and meetings
 - Appropriate standards of social distancing, requiring masks in crowded settings, staggered dining hours, temperature taking, etc.
 - Quarantine housing for residential students who show symptoms or test positive for COVID-19
5. Each time a student athlete dons a Topper uniform we expect him or her to engage in competitive play. While our expectation for the fall does not differ, we will await guidance from the NAIA and from the Southern States Athletic Conference regarding how play will be conducted.
6. Finally, we celebrate the fact that none of what has happened since we parted ways on March 6 has caught our Lord by surprise. In response to God’s faithfulness to us, we will enter the 2020-21 academic year no less dependent upon his amazing grace and no less committed to providing our community with ample opportunities to worship, to disciple, and to serve. If circumstances prohibit us from gathering as a full group for chapel in the MLB, we will collectively worship in small groups and by videoconference as needed. BSU, Koinonia, MA’s, FCA—all will continue in perhaps new formats, but all will continue.

We are dedicated to being here for you and to providing for you the type of college experience that you have long anticipated. Ensuring that you have the best experience possible requires that we are ready to welcome you to Blue Mountain College in person and that we are equally ready to support you online if “Plan B” becomes necessary.

My prayers are with you for a good and safe summer. I can’t wait to see you in August!

Sincerely,



Barbara C. McMillin
President