



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

March 20, 2020

Dear BMC Students and Parents of BMC Students,

Allow me to express first of all my sincere hope that you and your family are well. Even though we are all practicing “distancing,” we are all—perhaps more than ever—keenly aware of and appreciative of our special bond as members of the BMC family. In these uncertain days I hope you will find comfort in the admonition that has comforted members of our family for nearly 150 years:

Psalm 121

I will lift up my eyes to the hills.
Where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.
He will not allow your foot to be moved.
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, he who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper.
The Lord is your shade on your right hand.
The sun will not harm you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil.
He will keep your soul.
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in,
From this time forth, and forevermore.

I write today to update you on the status of our plans for going forward at Blue Mountain College. As you know, effective March 23rd we will resume all classes in an online format. (You already have or will receive instructions from your professors and from Dr. Enzor, our Provost.) This week the faculty of BMC have labored intensely to design plans to facilitate your on-going education. They are prepared to pick up where we left off before spring break. I encourage you to pursue your studies with the same (or even greater) intensity in this new format. Our goal remains to finish strong and to finish well. These circumstances require us to exercise flexibility, but exercising flexibility does not give us license to reduce our standards or compromise our pursuit of Christ-centered excellence—to these expectations we must all remain faithful.

Allow me to address several other matters of concern to you through a “frequently asked questions” format.

1. Will the residence halls and dining hall remain open?

Yes, students who desire to return may enter the residence halls starting at 3:00 on Sunday, March 22. Our commitment to serve students who can benefit from housing, meals, student services, and internet access has not waived. Our Service Master housekeeping team is meticulously implementing their plan to sanitize surfaces, restrooms, and

commons areas. Temperature scans will be done for all students who elect to return when they arrive and routinely thereafter. Resident students will be “physically distanced” from one another in private rooms (as space permits). Dining services will be provided on a take-out basis by MMI Dining Systems.

2. What do I do about my belongings if I elect not to return to housing?
Alert Dean Ritchey that you do not plan to return to housing. He will email information to you regarding when to collect your things and how to check out.
3. Will face-to-face classes resume on April 6 as previously announced?
No, faculty have worked diligently to prepare for online delivery. Rather than disrupting the “flow” of the educational process once again, we have now determined that continuing classes online for the remainder of the semester is in the best interest of the teaching and learning process.
4. When will the semester conclude?
The semester will conclude as originally scheduled on May 8.
5. What can I do if I have trouble accessing my courses online?
Contact our IT help desk via email at support@bmc.edu or 662-685-4771 ext. 102 or ext. 100.
6. I am employed on campus as a work study student. May I continue to work?
Yes, contact your supervisor for details. If you choose not to continue, please notify your supervisor immediately.
7. I’m a senior. Will we have commencement?
Yes, but it may be unlike any prior (or future) commencement. To think that you might not have the opportunity to celebrate your accomplishments is unacceptable to me and to Blue Mountain College. The details are yet to be addressed, but we are already working on creative ways for you to don a cap and gown, march to the strains of “Pomp & Circumstance,” and receive your diploma. Needless to say, the Class of 2020 will be celebrated in a unique and meaningful way.

Students, realizing that these are highly stressful times for you, we want to be available to serve and support you as you may be dealing with a host of never-before-encountered issues. If you are struggling in any way—financially, emotionally, academically, spiritually—I encourage you to call the campus help line at 662-685-4771 extension 144 and describe your need. We will do our very best to assist you.

I close with a word especially for the parents of our students. As the mother of a college student, I am experiencing the same anxieties that are keeping all of us awake at night: Is my child safe? Does he need to stay isolated at home? Is he receiving the support he needs to complete the semester successfully? As the president of a small, private college, I am also experiencing the same anxieties that are keeping my counterparts awake all over the country—and even the world: Are we doing absolutely everything we can do to protect and serve our students with grace, with excellence, and with compassion? How do we recover from such a devastating situation? What happens next?

Whatever hat I am wearing—my mom hat or my presidential hat—I find, as I am sure you do, that this fluid situation has yielded more questions than answers. In the midst of what I heard referred today as this new “land of ambiguity,” we can find rest and comfort by placing our trust in our unchangeable, unshakeable, unstoppable God.

I am here to serve you. I covet your prayers as we seek to make wise decisions in the days ahead.

Sincerely,



Barbara C. McMillin
President