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Saint Mary's College fall semester - functioning through coronavirus

By Vera Kochan

As humankind adapts to the COVID-19 induced new normal, Saint Mary's College begins its 2020 fall semester doing what it can to provide students, faculty and staff with some semblance of business-as-usual. First and foremost, everyone affiliated with the campus is required to commit to the Gaels Wellness Pledge. The 10-point pledge encourages personnel to consciously adhere to the safety protocols put forth by the Contra Costa County Health Department, the California Department of Public Health, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The pledge includes: reporting any COVID-19 related symptoms to medical professionals; completing a daily health screening; staying away from campus if living with someone who has a confirmed case; reporting if tested positive; practicing good hygiene; keeping belongings and shared spaces sanitized; practicing physical distancing; complying with contact tracing, quarantine or isolation; wearing a mask; and avoiding stigmatizing and generalizing.

Instruction is primarily remote, although some in-person and hybrid courses are offered for undergrads living on campus using research and lab facilities, working in studios with performance-based courses, and attending seminars. There are newly developed outdoor classroom spaces that will also be utilized.

All facilities will go through a daily cleaning regimen by a custodial staff, and Facilities Services will provide individuals with disinfecting wipes and spray for use in computer labs, classrooms and public spaces. Any athletic facilities that are open for use will undergo a more rigorous cleaning. Outdoor facilities will also be cleaned at least once a day.

Residential areas will see an increase in disinfection to three times a day for the restrooms and other common spaces. Students are expected to keep their individual bedrooms sanitized.

The Chapel, Health & Wellness Center, Oliver Hall, Café Louis, post office, recreation center, library and bookstore will all be open with frequent disinfection services provided several times a day.

Pending approval from county health officials, SMC will allow student-athletes from limited fall and winter sports to begin returning to campus in preparation for voluntary conditioning workouts.

Any events, meetings and gatherings should continue to be offered virtually with the exception for on-campus residential students. Campus departments may sponsor outdoor recreation activities for groups of 12 or less; outdoor worship or cultural ceremonies; and indoor/outdoor academics activities conducted outside of regular class sessions and associated with academic classes for groups of 12 or less.

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[back](#)

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