

Regathering Plan for Fall Semester 2020

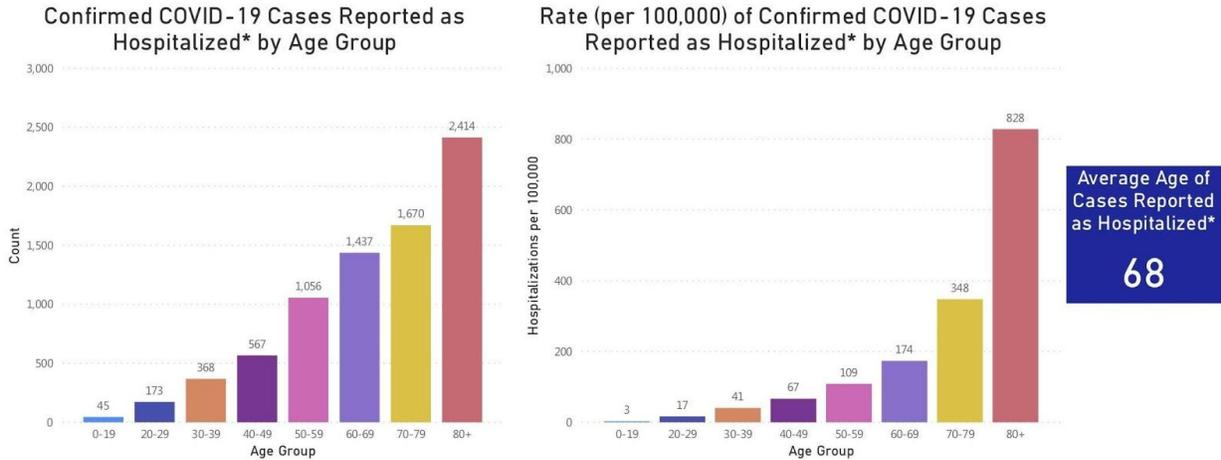
We have all been on a wild and crazy ride. When we said goodbye to each other back in early March, we had no idea what lay ahead. But, I want to thank our faculty members, our tech people, and all of you students who embraced remote learning - and together we completed every course in the spring semester. Our academic disruption plan is still ongoing to provide all possible help to those who are still trying to successfully earn credits from the spring semester.

Now it is time to talk about our path **forward**. It is important for all of you to know that for more than four months now, our college has been engaged in collaborative analysis with more than 50 other Massachusetts colleges on all issues related to public health and higher education. In our *literally* weekly meetings with the leadership of other private colleges, MEMA (Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency), the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, and the Board of Health, we have been given access to some of the finest consulting expertise in the country (though we haven't had to pay for it!). Through these associations, we have been able to plan our regathering as a college family based on best practices and guiding principles that begin with **health, safety and student progress** as our foremost concerns. We will continue to comply with guidelines from the CDC and from state and locals' authorities. Never would we, or will we, fail to be on our guard for the well-being of our college family. Before we begin with the specifics of our regathering plan, I'd like to share some data with you that has served an important role in our preparation. All of us understand the seriousness of this pandemic. That being said, the data unmistakably shows that some demographics are at significantly greater risk than others. The chart below, released by our governor's task force, clearly shows that college age individuals- even at the height of our state's surge – were, and are, at far less risk for serious health threats from COVID than almost any other age group.

But even though the risk for students is statistically miniscule, there are some members of our college family for whom the COVID-19 risk is more substantial. Given that, our comprehensive regathering plan is designed to help us be on guard not only for ourselves but for each other as well.



Hospitalizations & Hospitalization Rate by Age Group



Data Sources: COVID-19 Data provided by the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences; Population Estimates 2011-2018: Small Area Population Estimates 2011-2020, version 2018; ; Tables and Figures created by the Office of Population Health.
Notes: all data are cumulative and current as of 10:00am on the date at the top of the page; *Hospitalization refers to status at any point in time, not necessarily the current status of the patient, demographic data on hospitalized patients collected retrospectively; analysis does not include all hospitalized patients and may not add up to data totals from hospital surveys

Our Best Practices and Guiding Principles for Regathering

We all know the guidelines, and our plan simply codifies wise practice for all of us to follow.

Spacing - We are already well along the way to create a much less condensed physical environment on our campus for the fall.

1. Dorms - All resident's rooms will be singles (though you will only be billed for the double room rate!) By giving each student his/her own private space, we are going the extra mile to safeguard individual health.
2. Classrooms - No classroom will be furnished beyond 40% of its legal occupancy and all seats will be at least 6 feet apart.
3. Cafeteria - Spacing will be enforced in the cafeteria (as well as other practical steps to safeguard food management and distribution) and additional outside eating areas will be available.

4. Common areas - Don't be looking for your favorite sofa; it's in storage! Single chairs will be the order of the day, well-spaced of course. There will be extensive use of our beautiful outdoor space. Look for safety and health guidelines even in the workout area and in the gymnasium.
5. Office Visits - Even access to staff offices will be carefully structured to retain spacing and safety guidelines. Some offices may not host meetings with students at all – and in those cases there will be other options to meet with faculty and staff.
6. Library - There will be library access while the particulars of that are still under review.
7. Personal contact – As we have all become accustomed, touch is problematic in the age of COVID-19. No hand-shaking, or other unnecessary touching of persons or equipment. We will all have to be VERY serious about respecting the personal boundaries of everybody else.

Cleaning - Campus will be deep cleaned and disinfected during the week of August 3.

1. Before the Return - This thorough cleaning and disinfecting will include door handles, fixtures, window locks, furniture, bathrooms. Hope you like the smell of Clorox! Another aspect of cleaning that experts are emphasizing is to have circulating natural air. So whenever possible, windows will be open, doors will be propped, and fresh, natural air will be flowing.
2. Student Arrivals - As students arrive for their move-in reservations, August 10-14, and then for the duration of the semester, cleaning and disinfecting will be rigorous, ongoing, and constant. For example, classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected after every session.

Screening/Testing - We are now finalizing a contract for COVID-19 testing for our entire college family. The cost of the initial testing will be covered by the college with no added expense to students or staff.

1. Our plan is that through our medical services contractor, every person will be tested for COVID-19 during move in week, the week of August 10.
2. Any positive cases would of course go to self-quarantine. Our goal is to scientifically establish our campus as a COVID free environment at the start of our semester.
3. Any member of the college community who becomes symptomatic or has credible reason to assume exposure will be referred for repeated testing as

recommended by medical professionals. Virtually all health insurance plans cover symptomatic persons.

4. The results of specific tests will remain confidential according to HIPPA guidelines.
5. Regular temperature checks will be administered in an effort to identify potential risks.

Mask/PPE - All official college business, when putting individuals within 6 feet of each other, will require the wearing of masks. PPE will be available for both staff and students to safeguard our community health.

1. Our spacing strategies are designed to allow for the removal of masks in classrooms and in most common areas and of course in the dining facilities.
2. In the privacy of dormitories, consideration should be given to the health and comfort of those around you.

Hygiene - For months now, all of us have been made continuously aware of the need for handwashing and sanitizing to combat the spread of germs.

1. Regular handwashing with soap will be a constant theme of our communication and campus life.
2. Hand sanitizer will be everywhere. Use it!
3. Bathroom and shower areas will be the responsibility of all of us to keep clean and sanitized.

Transparency - Since we will be living together as a community, we must be obligated to clearly communicate to each other any information that could be related to the health of our college family.

1. It will be an essential responsibility of each person to communicate with campus authorities and/or Residence Life if you have been in a crowded environment or in any context in which social distancing was not practiced. Even a seemingly harmless trip to the mall could become an unhealthy context. Any overcrowding should intentionally be avoided, but any occurrence needs to be reported in the interest of campus health.
2. Any person experiencing symptoms that could be associated with COVID-19 should avoid public contact and report their personal health concerns to campus authorities and/or Residence Life by phone call or text message (not in persons, obviously).

Contingencies - With all of us working together, it is our goal to keep us all healthy, learning, and living “normal.”

1. In the event of sickness by an individual, quarantine areas will be constantly available on campus for residential students.
2. Appropriate medical attention will of course be absolutely necessary in all cases where COVID symptoms are a possibility.
3. This should be said loud and clear, **staff and students who are sick should stay in bed.** It’s unthinkable that we would endanger the health of others.
4. While we all continue to seek public health in our states and in our nation, we now have experience in moving to remote learning in an emergency situation. As we did in March 2020, we will be alert and sensitive to the guidance of state and national health officials.

It is obvious that the situation with the pandemic is fluid so that changes and adjustments will occur. All of us in our college leadership will keep “on the ready” to keep our highest-quality education underway while we respect the conditions of public health and act responsibly in the interest of our health.