

Information Regarding the 2020 Fall Semester at CMU

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Dear Incoming Graduate Students:

Welcome to Carnegie Mellon University! You have worked hard to get to this point, and we hope that you are proud of your accomplishments and share our optimism for the future ahead of you. We are excited to meet you and learn about your aspirations at CMU and beyond.

Your journey toward your graduate studies certainly has been different than you, or any of us, could have imagined. You have met the uncertainty and disappointment of the pandemic with courage and resilience. In addition, you are pursuing your graduate degree during a time of national soul-searching about systemic racism and social injustice. We will support you, and our whole CMU community of students, faculty and staff, by confronting these important issues at our university and taking concrete action to embed diversity, inclusion and respect for all lived experiences across CMU.

As we approach a fall semester that will be unlike any we have experienced before, we are committed to supporting you in every way possible as you pursue your world-class education and student experience at Carnegie Mellon. We wanted to take this opportunity to provide more detailed information and resources to help you plan for your start at CMU.

- **Graduate student orientation is an important time for you to connect with your new CMU community, build relationships across campus and learn more about the university.** You will receive more information about orientation from your college or department in the coming weeks.
- **CMU will begin its fall semester as planned on August 31.** We will provide you with a CMU-quality experience in your program this fall wherever you are physically located, and if you begin your studies remotely, we look forward to welcoming you to campus when you are able to arrive. If you are considering whether to start the fall semester remotely, or need to do so, the Heinz College's Office of Admissions is here to help with those arrangements. *In particular, international students who have concerns about their immigration status or visa should contact our [Office of International Education](#), which will be available to you throughout the summer to provide information and counsel.*
- **CMU is investing in its remote learning infrastructure and in a hybrid model, blending in-person and remote learning.** This approach will deliver academic excellence while minimizing any potential disruption to your education should remote instruction be required due to another wave of COVID-19 this fall.
- **In as many cases as possible, courses that are offered with in-person instruction will also be offered remotely.** Over the summer, staff from CMU's Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation are working with faculty to design, update and improve courses to provide students with the best possible educational experience, building on what we learned from successfully transitioning our 2,400 classes to remote instruction for the spring semester and relying on CMU's long-tested learning science principles. In addition, we are upgrading classrooms this summer with technology needed to best support remote learning.
- **The determination for whether courses or engagement opportunities will be offered in-person will be based on safety protocols, guidance from department heads, classroom space and the number of enrolled students.** You will receive detailed instructions from your academic program regarding scheduling your courses in the next several weeks.

- **Graduate students attending professional programs and those who are engaged in our research enterprise are vitally important members of our community.** We are working closely with your schools, programs and faculty to ensure an excellent CMU experience. Return-to-research plans are well underway and will ensure all lab participants are aware of and able to meet the safety measures CMU is requiring for resumption of on-site activities.
- **After Thanksgiving, all courses will be taught as remote-only; however, research efforts will continue.** We have made this decision to protect the community from the inherent risk of travel to and from campus between Thanksgiving and winter break.
- **All students, whether physically on campus or remote, will have access to a wealth of student services,** including [career and professional development](#) opportunities, access to our [Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion](#) and resources within the [Student Academic Success Center](#), [The HUB student service center](#) and [Disability Resources](#). We also are offering newly expanded services to support your [physical, emotional and mental health](#).
- **We are committed to providing a safe environment on our campus.** Our work to address your safety on campus includes: increasing breaks between classes to 30 minutes to ensure students are able to move between classes with enough time to adhere to physical distancing requirements; instructional and directional signage; modifying spaces to support physical distancing; enhancing sanitation practices; developing testing and contact tracing protocols with our accredited [University Health Services](#) clinical staff; and distributing facial coverings, as needed. We will continue to provide you with more details about our mitigation strategies as they are confirmed.

We are committed to providing you with an exceptional CMU education and experience. We will continue to update you on our plans for the fall semester over the summer. In addition, our [COVID-19](#) site is continually updated as we are closely tracking the situation and incorporating new information.

Along with your deans, we are excited to see what new paths you forge, both personally and professionally, as much as we look forward to the collaboration, mentorship and scholarly pursuits that we know will further shape and guide your graduate education at Carnegie Mellon University. Again, welcome to CMU!

Sincerely,

Jim Garrett, Provost

Gina Casalegno, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students