

Dear College of Idaho Community,

We are writing on behalf of the Presidents and the Executive Council to convey details related to the 2021 Spring Semester and May Term. It is our hope that this announcement provides ample time for faculty, staff and students to make necessary adjustments regarding course delivery, housing and other important aspects of college operations.

On November 1, the College transitioned to Phase 4 of in the [Updated Re-Opening Plan](#), allowing for expanded co-curricular activities but maintaining online and hybrid instruction. The possibility of movement to Phase 5 for the 2021 Spring Semester and May Term has been under careful consideration since that time. Phase 5 would mark a return to in-person instruction as our primary teaching mode, along with unrestricted residential and travel options. The metrics for advancing to this phase include not only demonstrable success in achieving safety in Phase 4, but also the availability of an effective vaccine, effective medications to combat COVID-19 once contracted, a reliable timeframe for acquisition of herd immunity, and/or a dramatic reduction in the incidence of infection at the College and surrounding area.

There is good news to be found in reviewing these metrics: The College has succeeded in limiting the spread of infection on campus, and promising indications have emerged in the past week regarding two vaccines under development and nearing distribution. The first COVID-19 vaccine is anticipated to be authorized by the Food and Drug Administration shortly, with distribution to begin immediately to every state in the union. A second vaccine is anticipated be authorized two weeks after the first, with enough combined vaccine for 20 million people expected to be available in December and more coming in 2021.

However, there is also compelling reason for continued caution: Exposure across the state has remained high, prompting Idaho Governor Little to move from Stage 3 back to Stage 2 in the State's response plan and to impose new restrictions on the size and type of public gatherings. No new medications have yet been developed to combat the disease once contracted, and the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has made clear the fact that initial distribution of vaccines will prioritize frontline healthcare workers, first responders, the elderly, and those with underlying or chronic health conditions ahead of the general population. No detailed information has yet emerged on how long it will take to achieve herd immunity in our community, but it seems certain to take longer than the spring term.

As a result of these considerations, **Presidents Brigham and Everett, in consultation with the Executive Council, have determined that the College will remain in Phase 4 for the start of the 2021 Spring Semester and May Term.** This means that online and hybrid instruction will remain the primary mode of teaching, and residing on campus will be optional rather than required.

Significant enhancements will nonetheless take place during the spring terms. Courses are being added on a one-time basis to provide extra variety and interest in the curriculum, and more in-person activities will be provided for those students who elect to live on campus. Some classrooms are being outfitted with state-of-the-art auto-tracking cameras and updated speakers and microphones for improved hybrid instruction. Feedback from the recent survey of students is being incorporated across contexts ranging from the online classroom to in-person food service/offerings and residential settings to improve students' overall experience. New campus locations will be made available for socially-distanced studying, as well as enhanced opportunities for online engagement. New in-person and digital programming will be offered for recreational and mental health purposes.

Additional details will be provided for specific populations within our community in coming days. In the meantime, we wish everyone a safe and satisfying holiday break.

Sincerely,

David Douglass and Paul Bennion