June 15, 2020

Dear Students,

We have missed your presence on campus, and we look forward to seeing all of you in August. I hope you are well and able to enjoy the summer despite the restrictions of the pandemic.

The spring semester was unprecedented in the history of Notre Dame, with the shift to remote instruction at mid-semester. The coming academic year will be unique in its own way, as we adapt to campus life in the time of COVID-19. We have also experienced the horrific killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and the protests, discussions and soul-searching that have followed his death. As I wrote in my letter of June 8, the issues raised by that terrible incident and the subsequent unrest are very important for us to reflect upon, discuss and act on in the next academic year and I will have more to share on these matters in the days ahead. In this letter, however, I will speak to you specifically about the health-related changes to campus life that you will experience when you arrive.

In a letter of May 18, I announced to you that we would welcome you to campus for classes in August. Our plans for the fall semester have been guided, as always, by three commitments: 1) to protect the safety of students, faculty and staff; 2) to continue to provide an education that nurtures the mind, body and spirit; and 3) to advance human understanding through scholarship, research and creative expression. The particular challenge in the coming academic year will be to keep everyone in the campus community safe and healthy in the time of COVID-19 as we continue Notre Dame’s central work of education and inquiry.

You will see many changes to campus life to protect the health and safety of the entire community. While I cannot include all the details in this letter, I write to give you a general
idea of what to expect. Vice President for Student Affairs Erin Hoffmann Harding will soon write to provide you with more information about student life. We also bring to your attention our new campus reopening website, which can be found here. We will in the coming weeks post more information on the website as it becomes available.

As the website indicates, we are in the midst of a gradual five-phase process to reopen campus. The formulation of these phases, and the protocols and practices appropriate to each, were informed by the guidelines established by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the directives of local health officials and by extensive consultation with infectious disease experts at the Cleveland Clinic and elsewhere. We have done everything we can to ensure that the reopening of campus is guided by government public health directives and the best medical expertise available.

We are currently in Phase 2 of our process. We have in the last few weeks, among other things, completed a move-out process so that students could retrieve their belongings from our campus residence halls, reopened numerous research labs and some libraries on our campus, and once again offered public Masses in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in accordance with the guidelines of our diocese. In Phase 3, which begins in July, we will welcome a small number of graduate students back for in-person instruction and institute further health and safety training for campus. In Phase 4, which begins later in July, we begin the phased return of the larger student body to campus, along with more extensive training and protocols. Finally, in Phase 5, we will have in August nearly all our students on campus and all campus buildings open, with at least restricted access. When you arrive on campus in greater numbers for the academic year, all of our initiatives related to prevention, testing, cleaning and sanitation, daily monitoring of symptoms, contact tracing, and quarantining and isolation protocols as necessary for those who have been exposed to COVID-19, will be fully operational.

As previously communicated, we plan to **start classes the week of August 10, continue through without a fall break and conclude the semester before Thanksgiving**. We are making this adjustment to the calendar for the fall semester to avoid the transmission of COVID-19 that could occur if the Notre Dame community were to disperse for a break and then come back together on campus. The change in schedule is just one of a great many adjustments each of us will need to make in order to have a successful reopening. Throughout the coming academic year, we will need to be creative, flexible, vigilant, and unwavering in our commitment to caring for our own health and that of everyone around us.
The following is a list of some of the guidelines and practices that you can expect to govern life on campus this fall:

- All members of the Notre Dame community—students, faculty, staff, as well as visitors—will be expected to wear masks or face coverings when in any University building in the company of others, including in classrooms, and to practice physical distancing. When outdoors, we ask that masks are worn whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained. Students living on campus will be expected to wear face coverings in all common areas of the residence halls, but not within their assigned room.

- Robust and easily accessible systems to test for the virus will be in place. We will announce protocols for testing in the coming weeks.

- All students, faculty and staff will complete a daily health screening. Students will be expected to respond appropriately to the direction given by University Health Services if they have concerning symptoms.

- All students who report symptoms will be expected to follow the testing, contact tracing, quarantine and isolation protocols established by Notre Dame and our local health officials should they become ill or are exposed to COVID-19.

- During the fall semester of 2020, University-sponsored travel will be severely limited to essential travel. The University further expects that all students, faculty and staff will avoid personal travel away from campus, their homes, or the local area during the fall 2020 semester except for special circumstances (e.g., sick family members). Similarly, visitors to campus will be restricted.

- For undergraduates, we plan to stagger student arrivals on-campus over a two-week period to avoid crowding and allow time to orient our community to health protocols. Graduate and professional schools will operate on calendars specific to their needs, and those students will be notified about schedules directly by their program or school. Details about arrival times and orientation schedules will be communicated in the coming weeks.

- Classrooms and other learning spaces are being reconfigured to ensure adequate physical distancing for faculty and students, and we will utilize some campus spaces not traditionally used as classrooms. Courses that include labs, performances, travel,
and other unique requirements may be adjusted to accommodate protocols for physical distancing and online access.

- There will be opportunities, of course, for in-person gatherings provided they meet University and health guidelines, but many co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (lectures, performances, club activities, events) will be held virtually.

- Dining hall times and lay-outs will be adapted to preserve appropriate physical distancing. In addition, on-campus dining will provide expanded take-out and other options to protect health and safety.

- We recognize that this period is a time of stress and anxiety for many. We will take steps to enhance the University’s mental health resources and to encourage us all to attend to this important aspect of our overall well-being.

While the above does not include all the modifications we need to make for the fall semester, it reflects some of the ways campus life will change to ensure the safety and health of the campus community.

We need to remain open and adaptable in our planning as we receive new information through public health guidance, medical advice, changing local and regional conditions, and other variables we may not be able to anticipate. Most importantly, all of us will need to exhibit the spirit of community and collaboration that characterizes Notre Dame in order to keep every member of the campus community safe.

Know that we look forward with great anticipation to welcoming you back to campus this fall. We face great challenges both from the novel coronavirus and from the social issues that confront us. I am confident that we can, by drawing together as a community, respond to these challenges in ways that reflect the best of Notre Dame.

Until we gather here on campus, you and your loved ones are always in my prayers.

Sincerely,

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President