September 23, 2020

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff:

We are in the seventh week of classes, roughly the halfway mark of the fall semester. Thanks to the efforts of so many of you, both in adhering to health protocols and assisting in our COVID-19 response efforts, the number of positive cases remains at a manageable level. I’m deeply grateful to you and proud of what we have been able to accomplish together.

Our attention now turns to the second semester, which will present its own set of challenges. The cold temperatures of winter will not allow us to use outdoor spaces as we have so far this fall, and the winter months are also the peak for seasonal flu in this region. Consequently, after discussions with the President’s Faculty Advisory Committee, the Academic Reopening Committee, the President’s Leadership Council and the Student Advisory Group for Campus Reopening, we have decided to shift the dates for the second semester of the 2020-21 academic year to lessen our time on campus during these winter months.

For the 2021 Spring Semester, the first day of class will be Wednesday, February 3 and the last class day will be Tuesday, May 11. As with the Fall Semester, we will not have a spring break. There will be no classes on Good Friday, April 2, and we will offer special opportunities for students to...
celebrate Easter on campus. Final exams will be held on May 14, 15 and 17-19, with reading days for exams on May 12, 13 and 16. Commencement weekend will be May 22-23.

This schedule will give us a ten-week winter break. Research labs will remain open and operational, as will library resources, enabling our faculty and graduate students to continue to make progress on their research. We are calling this break the Winter Session of the 2021 Spring Semester, and plan to offer a variety of opportunities to students from internships to group projects to virtual language tables to online courses. You can expect to hear more about these opportunities in the weeks ahead from the Provost's Office. The fee for one online course during the Winter Session will be waived for those who are enrolled as full-time students for the 2021 Spring Semester. In addition, the Meruelo Family Center for Career Development is developing programs and resources for students who are interested in using the Winter Session for career discernment, and you will soon receive more information about those opportunities as well.

We are making plans and will soon share details regarding housing options for some students during portions of the Winter Session, including some international students, student-athletes and students for whom returning home will represent significant hardships.

Like so many things in this pandemic year, the new schedule will require that all of us adapt our plans. I apologize for any inconvenience this will cause. We believe the new schedule will give us the best chance to have a healthy semester here on campus.

As I have said before, the most important lessons we will teach or learn this year are about how we in the Notre Dame community can work together to make this a successful year. I know the year has asked a lot of each of you, and you have responded so well. I am proud of what we have accomplished, but we cannot let our guard down. Let's each of us recommit to doing our part to keep this community healthy and remain together here on campus.

Please remember to do the following:

1. Wear your mask.
2. Practice physical distancing.
3. Wash your hands regularly.
4. Complete your daily health check.
5. Show up when selected for surveillance testing.

God bless you all. Thank you for keeping us here together.

In Notre Dame,

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