

September 25, 2020

Dear Hiram Students:

After many conversations with the Health Center and other areas of the college, the Senior Cabinet has made decisions about the three-week term following the Thanksgiving break and about the start of spring semester 2021.

Although some details remain to be worked out, here are the major points:

1. Classes for the three-week term will be held online in synchronous and/or asynchronous formats, and generally students will not be allowed to return to campus after Thanksgiving break.
2. Students who have special circumstances will need approval to stay on campus. However, students who are approved to stay on campus for the three-week term will also be required to stay on campus during the Thanksgiving break. What those special circumstances are will be determined by the Dean of Students' office; more information about that will be forthcoming.
3. Only essential staff will be required to be on campus during the three-week term. The vice presidents will review the criteria for essential staff in their areas and communicate that information. All others will work remotely.
4. The spring term will start one week later than normal, on Monday, January 18, and classes will be held in face to face, blended, or online synchronous and/or asynchronous format. The Dean of Students' office will send out information about the timing and process for students' return to campus. That Monday is Martin Luther King Day, and we will have special programs in lieu of classes. Classes will begin Tuesday, January 19, and there will be no spring break. The 12-week term will end on April 14, with a one-week break before the spring three-week term begins on April 21. We will decide by early February whether or not students will return to campus for the spring, 2021 three-week term.

We made the decision to hold the three-week term online out of concern for the health of our community. We have been fortunate this fall, thanks to the diligence of students, faculty, and staff in following guidelines for the prevention of the spread of the virus. But many experts have advised that Thanksgiving poses a very real threat. In addition to close family and other social gatherings, colder weather will force people indoors, and the danger posed by the coronavirus will be combined with the onset of flu season. Because the three-week term is so short, we would have neither the time nor the resources to test and quarantine returning students as we did at the start of the 12-week term this fall. And if students contracted the virus and had to be isolated, they could not be sent home and might have to remain here over the winter holiday.

It is always possible that a change in circumstances will alter these plans, but we are confident that this is the best course of action given our current knowledge.

Thanks to all of you for working together to keep our community as healthy as possible. I am particularly proud of the care and responsibility that Hiram students show every day, as you protect both yourselves and others by following the "Hiram Five" guidelines for a healthy campus environment.

Dave

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