

BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY

O u r S t a n d a r d i s C h r i s t

To: All Traditional Students
From: Dr. Roger Parrott, President
Date: Tuesday, June 8, 2020
Re: Preparing for the Fall Semester

Students –

I can't wait to see you on campus in just 10 weeks! It will be here before we know it.

This has been an amazing few months for us all since Covid-19 closed down the country in March, and I know we're anxious to get back to normal. This semester will be filled with opportunity and excitement, but we're also going to need to make some important accommodations to keep everyone safe as our world continues to deal with Covid-19.

You'll remember from my letter to you on May 1, we have built precautions into the structure of the fall semester including –

- limiting most classes to no more than 15 students
- providing traditional students with the option to take up to 2 online classes during the term
- canceling any large indoor group meetings, including chapel (chapel will be virtual, but not required)
- following detailed cleaning protocols designed to protect heavily used campus facilities from the virus.

Now that we're getting closer to the start of the fall term, we have been able to set further plans.

1. Academic Calendar Changes

We are making some unique adjustments in the fall semester calendar to limit our exposure to Covid-19 and make your travel plans simpler.

- a. **All in-person course work will be completed before the Thanksgiving break.** This schedule change is becoming the norm across much of higher education this fall. The last day of face-to-face classes will be Tuesday, November 24th. (Online and Adult 7-week classes will continue on the normal schedule through December 5th.)
- b. The semester will continue through the normally scheduled time, but the days after Thanksgiving will be for virtual or take-home final exams and semester projects. ALL work after November 24th will be remote. You will not need to come back to campus after Thanksgiving if you'd rather stay home because arts juries, laboratory learning, and all Arts performances will be completed before the break.

- c. In order to complete our class time before the Thanksgiving break (and also limit the amount of travel that could increase exposure to the virus):
- we have canceled our normal Fall Break scheduled for October 12 & 13
 - our classes will meet on Labor Day, September 7, rather than taking that day as a holiday.

By utilizing these three days, we make up the days of class we would normally have after Thanksgiving.

- d. Commencement will be held as planned on December 12th – assuming it is safe to have large groups together by then.

2. Belhaven's Financial Commitment To You

This spring the entire world was caught off-guard by the shut-down caused by Covid-19. That was an amazing time, as Belhaven moved 640 classes into a virtual format within a week. Students, faculty, and staff all did a remarkable job to make that work.

Now that we can look ahead and know there is even the *slightest possibility* that a shut-down could happen again this fall, we can better prepare. We are planning and praying that we'll have a normal semester, but IF the virus should cause us to shift to a virtual format at some point during the semester, we are ready to make the best out of a tough situation:

- a. If we have to shift to exclusively virtual/online learning *before* Thanksgiving – the portion of the semester remaining will be prorated to the Belhaven University online tuition rate for all traditional students.

Scholarships will also be proportionately reduced, but you would not pay more than the published online rate for the remainder of the semester that must be completed virtually – since, at that point, you'll be receiving a completely online education.

This would be a financial saving for most students.

- b. If we have to shift to virtual/online learning before Thanksgiving, the Residence Halls, food service, and all campus facilities will be closed within a few days after the required shut-down and all students would be required to leave campus.

Because living on campus would no longer be an option, we would refund the portion of your cost for residential living after the halls are closed to all students – if you have a residence hall scholarship, that grant would also be proportionately reduced.

We trust these two financial commitments give you confidence as we go into the semester – Belhaven is not only prepared to shift to a virtual format if the virus requires us to make the change, but there will also be a cost-savings to you should we need to teach virtually.

3. Residence Halls

Residential life is an important part of your university experience, and we're making a few changes to assure your move-in, move-out, and dining is as "Covid-safe" as possible.

- a. Move-in day is Friday, August 21st – and continues on Saturday and Sunday for returning students. Fall student athletes come to campus on an earlier schedule and will receive communication from the Department of Athletics outlining those dates and specific requirements.

8:30 – Friday, August 21st – New student check-in begins - Billy Kim Center

9:00 – Friday, August 21st – New student move-in begins

1:00 – Friday, August 21st – Returning students move-in begins

All students, and their family and friends helping with move-in, must wear appropriate face coverings.

- b. Because we will conclude face-to-face classes before the Thanksgiving break, you do not need to come back until second semester begins on January 11th. If you prefer to stay on campus for the break and/or come back after Thanksgiving, the residence halls, food-service, and all facilities will be available through the remainder of the semester. But remember, after the break there will not be any in-person structured activity on campus and we'll be encouraging all faculty to work from home after Thanksgiving.
- c. If we are able to hold commencement as planned on Saturday, December 12th, we will follow our regular residence hall closure schedule: halls will close on Thursday, December 10th for all students except graduating seniors who will need to move out of the residence hall by 5:00 pm on Saturday, December 12th. If we must postpone commencement, the residence halls will close at the conclusion of the final exam period on Thursday, December 10th.
- d. Arranging adequate social distancing for students during meals is a challenge. We are taking several steps to assure you are safe. Meals will not be self-serve this semester – our food service is taking extraordinary precautions with food safety. Seating in the dining commons will be significantly reduced to allow distancing. The number of students in the serving area at one time will be limited. The entrance to the dining commons will be moved to separate access from the other portions of the student center.

The Shoe Bird will be open as usual with appropriate distance for seating. And we are making provisions for faculty, staff, and visitors to be offered a grab-and-go option separate from the dining commons in order to provide more seating for enrolled students.

4. Our "Belhaven Promise" – To Keep Each Other Safe

The fall semester will require some Covid-19 precautionary adjustments that will be inconvenient for all of us – but critical for our safety.

While I'm sure as a university student you feel healthy and invincible, you must remember you'll be close to many faculty and staff who are older, and some people of all ages have underlying medical conditions that make them vulnerable to a virus that could be deadly. We need to work together to keep everyone safe –

plus, college students are not immune from significant complications from Covid-19, and we all need to stay healthy and productive this fall.

Because of our need to work together, we're requiring every student, faculty member, and staff member commit to our "Belhaven Promise" which is a series of precautionary actions we'll each follow for the protection of all.

More importantly, we have a biblical mandate to do "for the least of these" which, in this time of Covid-19, are those who are older or have underlying health conditions. Don't do it just for you – do this for others because God calls you to do so.

These requirements will not be optional. It is critical for our safety that we agree to these precautionary boundaries, and hold to these standards because of our commitment to love each other in Christ.

I think the best summarization I've seen explaining why we all have a responsibility to take Covid-19 precautions, comes from Dr. Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, writing to his congregation about why masks are required to attend services:

"Unfortunately, wearing a mask has become a political issue for many people. It's not a political issue; it's a medical issue. It's not about your freedom; it's about keeping other people safe.

Some people say, "I feel comfortable not wearing a mask." But it isn't about you; it's about other people. Yes, a mask may to some extent protect you from the coronavirus, but it's more effective in keeping others around you from contracting it.

The New Testament is filled with principles that say we ought not use our freedom to hurt other people. Romans 14:7–8 says, "Not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord." Philippians 2:3–4 says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

What we do affects others, and we are to look out for the welfare of others. While you may feel OK about not wearing a mask, you may be around an elderly person or a person with respiratory problems who could die if they contracted this virus. That's why we're asking everybody to wear a mask so that we can protect one another as we worship together."

We will wait to finalize our Belhaven Promise until closer to the start of the semester and base the requirements on the latest direction of The CDC and medical experts. We want to stay flexible – ready to ease or strengthen these measures as the semester progresses.

To help you prepare for the start of the semester, our Belhaven Promise will most likely will include the following expectations:

1. FACE COVERING – A mask or face covering is one of the most important precautions we can take – and while they are annoying and they make us feel self-conscious and awkward, masks are extremely effective in controlling the spread of Covid-19. A clean mask or other facial covering *must* be worn inside all buildings in areas where at least 6’ social distancing is not possible – including during most classes when possible. Masks or face coverings will not be required in the residence hall rooms and dining commons, but will be required in the food serving area.
2. SYMPTOMS - At the earliest onset of any Covid-19 symptoms, you must stay confined and notify the Student Development office immediately – this includes fever of 100.4 F or higher, dry cough, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat or loss of taste or smell.
3. TESTING – It is not yet clear what testing options might be available by this fall, but if reliable testing is appropriate and available, we will utilize this resource. And if needed, each of us will share information facilitating contact tracing as we seek to identify and/or isolate those who have been exposed to the virus.
4. DISTANCE - Maintain appropriate social distancing, especially in classroom settings, hallways, or the presence of older members of the community and those of all ages who may have underlying health conditions.
5. DIRECTION - Follow directional signs that require one-way traffic patterns inside the hallways of Irby Hall and Billy Kim Center. Some indoor facilities, Arts performances, or athletic events may have limited access at times to assure room for social distancing.
6. HANDS - Wash your hands with soap and water for a full 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer as often as necessary.
7. VACCINE - We strongly encourage a flu vaccine this fall and will have vaccines available free on campus. A flu vaccine is not required by the University, but health care professionals are urging it as the smart and safe thing to do, and we hope everyone will take advantage of this free preventative measure. And if a Covid-19 vaccine becomes available, it will unlock the door to returning to normal if we’ll do all we can to take advantage of that protection.
8. QUARANTINE – If a residential student contracts the virus, we are prepared with separated rooms for quarantine until your family can help you travel home for recovery. If commuter students contracts Covid-19 they must stay off campus completely. Faculty and staff will also be quarantined if they contract the virus and plans are being made to fill in for those who might become sick. Faculty will be prepared to work from a distance with any student needing to quarantine from the virus, and *you will not be penalized academically* for taking these precautions or if you become ill with Covid-19.

Even after the semester begins we will be monitoring the best advice for university campuses. We don’t want our requirements to be any more restrictive than necessary in order to keep everyone safe. Certainly things could change as Belhaven and the world learn more about protection from Covid-19.

5. **Federal Government Cares Act Funding**

The Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress is intended to provide economic relief for enrolled students in the Spring semester of 2020 that were impacted by the pandemic. The law requires the money be given directly to students for “*expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to the coronavirus.*”

As you apply, please consider that even though Belhaven University was granted \$1.1 million in CARES funding that will go directly to students, with our 5,000 student population that would be less than \$250 per student if divided equally. Therefore, in keeping with federal regulations, we are prioritizing students with the greatest financial need related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus. See the Belhaven University Covid-19 FAQ to learn more and complete an application.

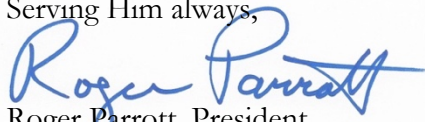
Counting Down the Days Until We are Together!

This may be the most important and wonderful semester of your life.

We will learn much, we will grow, and we will be pushed to be strong people of grace and care – showing the love of God to each other, and demonstrating that a Christian learning community can come together during adversity.

We can do this! I believe in you and know you'll be ready.

Serving Him always,



Roger Parrott, President