



OFFICE *of the* PRESIDENT

May 8, 2020

Dear Villa Maria College Community,

As we await a formal decision from elected officials, Villa Maria College has developed a plan that will allow for a phased reopening of its Buffalo, NY campus.

"Based on everything we are hearing right now, my assumption is that staff members will slowly return to campus over the summer, with many safety precautions in place. Having staff members back on campus will allow us to complete all necessary preparations for students to return to campus in the fall, assuming conditions permit," Villa's President Dr. Matthew Giordano said in a letter that was sent home this week.

"To be clear, we do not yet know if students will be allowed to return to campus at the end of August, but based on everything we are hearing now, I am optimistic that they will," the letter continued.

In the meantime, Dr. Giordano and his Cabinet are engaged in serious high-level planning for any scenario the College might face for the start of its Fall 2020 semester, which is set to begin on August 31.

The College anticipates that social distancing and other safety protocols will still be in place in the fall and intends to fully follow all recommended guidelines.

While there will not be any large campus gatherings, the College has plenty of space on campus in which to spread out for classes and learning activities. Cleaning and sanitization efforts will be increased significantly, and people may be asked to wear masks and embrace any other safety measures that may be recommended.

The College's goal is to provide as much in-person, on-campus learning as health experts and elected officials will allow us to safely accommodate. Faculty members will be ready to incorporate online instruction into their courses if it is necessary, building on what they learned this semester to make sure it is of the highest quality.

At this time, Villa Maria has no plans move its classes completely online unless it is forced to, like it was this spring. In any case, a Villa education will still be highly individualized and supportive, based on establishing meaningful connections with each and every student.

"In many ways Villa is the ideal campus for these unprecedented times," said Dr. Giordano. "As the smallest campus in Western New York, we can reduce population density much more



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easily than many of our peers. Not having residence halls dramatically reduces the risks of an outbreak on campus. We have lots of support systems in place to help students navigate this new normal and to cope with new stresses and fears. Our culture, built on our Felician values, emphasizes care and compassion for the whole person.”

“More than ever, we are convinced of the value of a Villa Maria College education. Our graduates will have the necessary skills to succeed in what will now be a very competitive marketplace,” continued Dr. Giordano. “Already an essential qualification in a number of industries, a college education will be absolutely vital to securing work in the new economy. Villa has a long history of offering a unique educational experience to help students achieve their goals and be prepared for lifelong success. We are more committed than ever to providing this quality education, no matter the circumstances or conditions.”

As final decisions are made, Villa Maria College will continue to evolve its plan to reopen and will continue to communicate with the entire Villa community.

For more information on COVID-19 as it relates to Villa Maria College, visit www.villa.edu/Coronavirus.

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