

Dear Rice Community –

I sent the following message to current undergraduate students, and a slightly modified version to incoming students outlining our plans for the fall semester. I am forwarding for your reference as I know the contents are important for many offices as we work to support the return of our students. As you will see, I am hosting a Q&A session tomorrow for students and families. The session will be recorded and posted for viewing by faculty and staff as promptly as possible.

Best regards,
Bridget Gorman, Dean of Undergraduates

Dear Undergraduate Students -

I am writing today to provide some key updates on the fall semester experience at Rice. Please read this message carefully, as well as the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that I reference throughout this letter, since together they provide answers to many questions that you probably have about the upcoming year at Rice.

Please know that everyone is working hard to welcome you to Rice in August, and throughout our planning process we have kept the health and wellbeing of our community at the forefront of our decision-making. We are committed to providing as rich and vibrant a campus experience as possible under the circumstances as well as an immersive online learning experience, and we are excited for another year of academic and experiential learning to begin. At the same time, we must recognize that this is an uncertain time in Houston, the United States, and across the globe. While we expect most of our students to be on campus this Fall, we recognize that some of you may not be able to join us, for a variety of reasons. This message will provide you with detailed information on the Fall semester so you can make an informed decision about your own plans for the upcoming year as a Rice student.

As we have seen since COVID appeared in the U.S. last spring, the situation continues to evolve, and we are closely monitoring the increasing rate of infection in Texas, including Houston. In the weeks ahead my office and others will be sending out detailed updates on our fall start, including any changes to our plans if and when that happens.

At the end of this message, I will also provide details about a short survey that all undergraduate students (new and returning) must complete, regarding your fall intentions.

Campus Health and Safety: A Layered Protection Plan

Our planning for fall prioritizes public health and safety, and we are implementing a layered approach -- meaning that we will not rely on a single tactic, but rather multiple

tactics to limit the transmission of COVID-19 and promote a healthy campus. Because of this, our campus will look and operate differently than it has in the past.

- As we [previously communicated](#), everyone on the Rice campus must **wear a face covering** that covers their mouth and nose as a precaution to protect others. This includes when you are inside all indoor spaces on campus, with the exception of your assigned room or suite in the residential colleges. When outdoors you must have a face covering with you at all times, and you must wear it if you come in close proximity to others (within six feet).
- We have [established rules](#) for **physical distancing**, including **limits on the size of gatherings**. As much as possible, everyone is expected to stay six feet away from other people, whether indoors or outdoors. We are also limiting gatherings to no more than 50 people, whether inside or outside. Classroom meetings and some other indoor events will be further limited to 25 as described below. To help facilitate limits on gathering sizes and physical distancing, we will be posting “COVID Occupancy” signs on the entrances to every room on campus, and furniture in rooms will be reconfigured to promote physical distancing.
- We are [modifying our buildings](#) to reduce the chance of COVID-19 transmission, in addition to [enhancing our cleaning and disinfecting procedures](#) across campus.
- We are enhancing our ability to learn, socialize, and relax **outside**, since research shows that transmission of COVID is reduced in outdoor spaces. We are substantially expanding the furniture in our residential college quads, and [we are building temporary structures and erecting tents](#) for use as classroom space, study space, and locations for social gatherings. We are asking each of you if feasible to bring a small, lightweight collapsible chair to help facilitate your ability to be outside more frequently (and we will provide a chair to those who cannot bring their own).
- Like all members of the Rice community, you will be required to actively **monitor your health** for signs of COVID-19 on a daily basis. This includes taking your temperature when you get up each morning, and staying home or in your room if you feel unwell. We are also requiring all students to get a flu shot by October 30, and are arranging for multiple opportunities to do so on campus. Our Student Health Services department will operate with both in-person and televisit options, and our Rice Emergency Medical Service (REMS) service will be continually available, as usual.
- **Testing.** If possible, we ask that all students get tested for COVID-19 just before their departure for Rice; if you test positive, stay at home and contact us so we can help you work through options for your semester start. On first arrival to Rice, all students (free of charge) will immediately be given a rapid test for COVID-19, and we are providing isolation housing for those who test positive (described below). Throughout the semester we will also provide polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for COVID-19 on demand for those who are symptomatic or exposed to

COVID-19, and we will test an additional portion of our population on a weekly basis. Information on where to report for testing when you arrive on campus, and additional details on PCR screening during the semester, will be provided later this month.

- **Contact tracing.** We will identify persons who may need to be tested and quarantine through a blended approach that combines a digital platform through smartphones to identify those who may have had significant contact with a COVID positive person, along with interviews by trained personnel. Any member of the Rice community, including students, who have significant exposure to a COVID positive person will be required to quarantine for up to 14 days (see below for more details).
- Prior to arriving on campus, all students will be required to review and sign a **Culture of Care Agreement**, which outlines specific behaviors expected of our students (including regular and thorough hand washing, consistent use of face masks in required indoor and outdoor areas, adherence to rules on physical distancing and size of gatherings, cleaning protocols, etc.). To help facilitate a healthy living and learning environment for students, we are developing a health education program and materials to increase awareness of the risks that can spread the disease, and awareness of indicators of the illness. We are also establishing two new positions within our residential college communities: COVID-19 Public Health Ambassadors, and a COVID-19 Community Court, who will work with our Student Wellbeing office, residential college core teams (magisters, RAs, college coordinators), and Student Judicial Programs to help with education and reinforcement of expectations and rules described in the Culture of Care Agreement. It is important to remember that we are all in this together - no member of our community may opt out of our expectations for health and safety when on campus.

Please visit our [FAQ](#) for additional details on our health and safety procedures.

Undergraduate Housing

We are taking reasonable and thoughtful steps to provide a residential experience that promotes health and safety, and this fall we are enacting some significant changes in how our residential colleges will operate. We must recognize that some members of our student population will test positive this fall -- and so we are establishing rigorous rules and procedures to care for students affected and protect our broader community. We are designating spaces for students to be cared for if they are ill with COVID or need to quarantine, enhancing protocols and responsibilities for cleaning, and enacting restrictions on visitors and how students may gather in residential spaces.

- **Isolation Housing.** For the fall semester, we were faced with the difficult decision of how to create space for students who test positive for COVID-19 to isolate while they recover. Critical parameters that influenced our selection of undergraduate isolation housing included separation from others in our community while also

being on our main campus so we can provide needed services (dining, medical care). For these reasons, we have selected Sid Richardson College as isolation housing. This means that Sid Richardson students will not live in their college this fall - they will live in other colleges, so all current fall bed assignments will be reassigned by running a new housing and room draw at every college later this month. Since we have a long-standing policy of guaranteeing on campus housing for all first year and incoming transfer students, this is necessary to provide matriculating Sid Richardson students with rooms within other colleges. Sid Richardson students who previously secured a bed at their college this fall will be eligible to enter the housing and room draw process at another college. A committee composed of college magisters and presidents has been tasked with overseeing this process, and we will be communicating additional details within the week.

And, to all members of Sid Richardson college, please know how sorry I am that we had to make this decision. It is not what any of us wanted, but it is the best option given the circumstances. I want to thank each of you. I very much appreciate the role that your college is playing in helping us take care of our community this fall. The new Sid building is on schedule to be completed in December, and I look forward to seeing you all move into this wonderful new space in January.

- **Roommates, Bathrooms, and Quarantine.** A key decision in our plan for campus living is that we are creating small communities, or “families”, within our residential colleges. A “family” includes roommates, suitemates, or others on a floor who share a common bathroom. Regardless of the exact configuration, students living in these spaces will be living together in new ways. Everyone must take care and actively engage in their living environment, especially around schedules for cleaning and use of shared spaces. Students with in-suite bathrooms will be provided with cleaning supplies to wipe down surfaces before and after use. Each day, common bathrooms will receive repeated and frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces by our Housing & Dining staff, including fogging twice per day. Students on floors with common bathrooms will develop daily schedules for bathroom use that limit the number of students in common bathrooms at one time.

Students who have been exposed to COVID-19 will be required to quarantine in their assigned residential college room or apartment (off campus or on campus) for up to 14 days. For students living on common bathroom floors, if any room on a floor is designated to quarantine, all non-quarantining students on that floor will temporarily move into a hotel adjacent to campus, at no additional cost to students, until the quarantine ends for those on their floor. In addition, on selected common bathroom floors at Baker, Will Rice, Hanszen, and Jones, we are reducing the number of students who will live on those floors. Housing and Dining will be collaborating with magisters and presidents at these colleges to select which rooms to remove from housing and room jack for the fall semester. Magisters at these four colleges will provide more information to students at their colleges in the time ahead.

- **Visitor policy.** Access to residential college spaces will be more restricted than usual. College access will be restricted to current students and selected Rice personnel. In addition, while undergraduate students may go into any college's common spaces, floor access in each college is restricted to floor residents only -- no visitors or overnight guests are permitted.
- **Residential College move-in dates and procedures.** Each student must limit their help with move-in to one family member or friend, and each person must wear a face mask and follow posted guidelines concerning physical distancing in shared areas including elevators and bathrooms. By mid-July returning students who left items in their rooms when they departed campus last spring will receive additional guidance from their college magister on retrieving their belongings.

Later this month we will send detailed move-in instructions to all students, including where to go for COVID testing upon arrival to campus. To reduce density during move-in, arrival will be staggered; below is a summary of key dates for move-in:

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- During July 27-31 or August 3-7: Greater Houston Area returning students (including those associated with O-Week) are required to place their belongings in their rooms (no unpacking or setting up).
- July 27: O-Week Coordinators and Presidents move in
- July 28: Chief Justices move in
- August 10-11: O-Week advisors and affiliates move in
- August 12-14: Greater Houston area new students move in
- August 15-16: Out of town new students move in
- August 22-23: Out of town returning students move in, greater Houston area returning students arrival.

Please visit our [FAQ](#) for additional details on undergraduate housing.

Off Campus Housing

The university has researched and evaluated several off-campus housing opportunities within a three-mile radius of the campus for students. The properties listed have expressed an interest in supporting our student community members this fall, and each offers short-term leases and many other amenities. Rental rates fluctuate based on market conditions, and we would ask those considering living off-campus to please take this into consideration when viewing options listed. To view options offered, please visit <https://offcampus.rice.edu/housing>. If you have question, our Rice Housing staff is available to assist and can be reached at ricehousing@rice.edu

Residential College Dining

Self-serve options like salad bars will no longer be available in our serveries. Hot meals will be served to students by staff in to-go containers, with some pre-packaged items also

available. All students with meal plans will be required to use their home serveries, and meal times will be staggered to reduce crowds and allow for students, both on and off campus, to move through at a faster pace. Students will be expected to wear face masks within the serveries and follow physical distancing protocols (floor markers and other signage will help facilitate proper spacing). Consistent with physical distancing protocols, indoor seating will be more limited, including in college commons, although we are substantially expanding the number of tables and chairs in each college quad, and meals can be eaten in student rooms, smaller gathering spaces within the colleges, and other locations across campus.

Please visit our [FAQ](#) for additional details on campus dining.

Academics, Tuition, Room and Board and Financial Aid

In preparation for fall semester, Rice has been engaged in a collaborative effort led by the Faculty Senate and the Academic Restart Committee, Rice Online Learning, and the Center for Teaching Excellence to enhance online course delivery for fall. All instructors are preparing for an immersive online experience to accompany the in-person teaching that will occur in many of our courses. To give you a sense of what that may look like, please take a few minutes to watch this [showcase on the fall experience](#).

- **Academic Calendar.** As was [recently communicated](#), we have changed our [Fall 2020 academic calendar](#). Classes will start as originally scheduled on Monday, August 24, and formal instruction will end on November 20 (the Friday before Thanksgiving). Final exams will occur in a remote format, consistent with the Honor Code, allowing students to return home for the Thanksgiving holiday without having to return to campus for finals if they wish.
- **Format of learning.** We are reconfiguring classrooms and room assignments to facilitate physical distancing between students, and to reduce the number of persons in a classroom at a single time. And while we very much hope to see you on campus in August, students may choose to enroll at Rice in a fully remote format this fall.

The majority of classes will be available in a dual delivery format, although a small number that do not translate well to an online format will be canceled or offered in-person only. Dual format consists of classes being taught simultaneously in the classroom and online. A dual delivery model of instruction allows students maximum flexibility in meeting academic requirements, and enables students who enroll remotely to access the same high quality education from our faculty. Please note, however, that in order to facilitate physical distancing, classes with enrollments greater than 25 will be offered only online, although an instructor can ask for an exception and teach a larger class in a dual delivery format utilizing an appropriate plan (which may include having different groups of students attend alternate class meetings) if the needed classroom space is available. Also, given the uncertainties of COVID-19, the University may choose to do all instruction remotely

at some point in the semester if circumstances warrant it. Whether a course is taught in dual delivery or online, it is expected that students will have opportunities for individual and small group interactions with faculty and teaching assistants throughout the semester.

- **Tuition, Room and Board and Financial Aid.** Regardless of the mode of instruction, the tuition rate for fall semester is the same since all Rice students will have access to faculty, student services and academic facilities. Rice will charge full room and board for those living on campus in residential colleges. Should you need to temporarily move out of a residential college to a hotel room due to quarantine, Rice will pay for the cost of hotel accommodations.

We understand that COVID-19 may have caused a loss of income for some families. If this has happened, we encourage you to reach out to the [Office of Financial Aid](#) to file an appeal of your financial aid package based on a change in family economic circumstances. Appeals are reviewed by a committee on a case-by-case basis.

Please visit our [FAQ](#) for additional details on academics, tuition, room and board, and financial aid.

International Students

For our international students, please know that we recognize the challenges that many of you may face in returning to Rice on time this fall. If you are experiencing any difficulties around your fall start plans, please reach out to the [Office of International Students and Scholars \(OISS\)](#) and schedule an appointment with an advisor to discuss your options. Also, we are intentionally planning for a dual delivery method of class content delivery, in part because we know that some students will not be able to return to campus in the fall. Time-zone differences will likely present a unique challenge for classroom discussions and interactive exercises, but all instructors are receiving considerable guidance and training for developing and executing active learning techniques to accommodate the time-zone differences for students.

If you are an international student, please visit our [FAQ](#) for more details.

Student Activities & Events

As critically important as the academic experience is at Rice, it is our ties to others that make our community special. We remain committed to maintaining the vibrancy of the Rice community - one where our students learn, engage with others, have fun, and make new friends as part of the college experience. It is for this reason that we are shifting away from saying “social distancing” and replacing it with “physical distancing.” This more accurately reflects how activities and events will be different during Fall semester, since we firmly believe that you can meaningfully socialize with others, even if you are six feet apart or meeting in a virtual format.

Please know that Rice will continue to hold events, and students will have plenty of opportunities to engage in social activities and programs through their residential colleges, student organizations, and broader campus organizations. Without doubt, some traditional activities and events cannot be held with physical distancing and space limitations. While most courses will be limited to no more than 25 students, events on campus will be limited to a max capacity of 50, and many typical common spaces will have significantly reduced capacities. We will continue to have event registration procedures that allow for thoughtful event planning and detailed risk management, but this is not a departure from prior practices -- it simply allows us to take into consideration the health and safety measures all faculty, staff, students, and campus visitors will practice.

As I noted above, we are expanding our ability to use outdoor spaces to allow for a greater number of medium and smaller sized gatherings on campus. In addition, our student affairs professionals, residential college personnel, and student leaders have been reevaluating and brainstorming fun activities that are inclusive for all students, whether they are in-person or joining virtually. Not surprisingly, student leadership is being particularly creative when it comes to planning social activities, and you will hear more about their ideas in the time ahead.

Next Steps and Resources for More Information

Despite the length of this message, as I noted above some decisions have yet to happen, and additional details need to be communicated on housing and other aspects of the Fall semester. Over the next few weeks you can expect to receive regular communications from me and from members of my division, so please be sure to check your email regularly.

Importantly, **every undergraduate student is required to fill out a survey by 5:00pm (central time) on Monday, July 6th. You will receive the link to your survey in a separate email from my office momentarily.** It will only take a few minutes to complete, and asks you to state your enrollment and housing intentions regarding the Fall semester. Please know that your answer to this question is not currently binding - rather, it is meant to give us a firmer understanding of your plans, which will help us better prepare as we move closer to the start of the semester. That said, since we are redoing our housing and room draw procedures (discussed above), **if you are a returning student who previously had a room assigned in your residential college for fall, we will only include you in the housing draw IF you indicate that you intend to enroll at Rice and live on campus this fall -- if you do not, we will not include you in housing draw (which will happen on or before July 15).**

Some of you may decide you would like to take a leave of absence, rather than enrolling at Rice in the fall. To submit this request, please submit the [undergraduate separation form](#).

Please mark your calendar for an online Q&A about our fall start plans, scheduled for Thursday, July 2nd from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. (central standard time). I'll be hosting the event, and will be joined by:

- Provost Reginald DesRoches
- Dr. Jessica McKelvey, Director of Student Health Services
- Mark Ditman, Associate Vice President of Housing & Dining
- Anne Walker, Executive Director of Financial Aid Services
- Adria Baker, Associate Vice Provost for International Education and Executive Director of the Office of International Students and Scholars

We hope you will attend and participate, as this will be a good opportunity for us to answer questions you might have about our planning for the fall as well as the rationale behind our decisions. You may submit questions ahead of time [here](#), or you may submit questions after the session begins. The Q&A session will be recorded and posted online for those not able to join during the session.

If you have additional questions not covered in this letter, linked FAQ, or during the online Q&A session on July 2, please send us a message at ugdean@rice.edu and we will respond in as timely a manner as possible. Also, I would encourage you to visit <https://coronavirus.rice.edu> and check for university updates on a regular basis.

I'd like to end by saying that we hope to see you on campus in August, but I certainly understand if you choose a different path. The success of the Fall semester will require collaborative effort and our united strength as a resourceful, caring and resilient community. All of us at Rice remain committed to pursuing our academic mission as best as we are able given the circumstances. We will be continually re-evaluating the plans I've just described based on the evolving COVID situation in Houston, and will inform you of any significant changes in our plans if and when that happens.

With warm regards,
Bridget Gorman, Dean of Undergraduates