



COLLEGE OF  
**MOUNT SAINT VINCENT**

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Students, Colleagues, Everyone who studies and works at the College:

Good afternoon. It is good to be with you, even virtually.

I'd like to thank many of you for sending questions. Sometimes, I am responding to your questions individually. In this address, I have worked in answers to the most frequently asked questions.

This pandemic is an unprecedented national disaster and crisis. We still do not know its scope.

I want again to thank you all for the resilience, goodwill, and grit with which you have responded to the demands this disaster is placing on us. You have sustained the important work that we do together and have shown that we really do pursue goodness, discipline, and knowledge. You have shown exemplary perseverance as well as an authentic interest in each other's well-being. I thank you for confirming the virtues I think we already knew you shared.

This crisis is not a singular event—it will be prolonged. At the College, we have moved our communal life online. Of course, we are all anxious and have temporarily lost something important. Many students, faculty, administrators, and staff report that they feel isolated. It is not as satisfying to connect with someone through text, email, FaceTime, or even Canvas online as it is to connect in person. Even when together, it is strange to have to stand six feet apart and to wash our hands more often than Lady Macbeth. That is why my updates have emphasized the importance of staying connected with each other, the importance of participating in class and engaging in student activities and service, the need for online departmental meetings and faculty governance, and even the need for this address. Silence can be misinterpreted as indifference. But each of us should remember that we are not alone. We are here for others, and they are here for us.

Our faculty report that students are being very diligent. We are very proud of that. Learning matters. What you must learn and the skills you must master really are a

survival package for life. We know that online classes demand even more of you—more diligence, more self-discipline, more initiative when you need help. It is very important that students ask for help when they need it. Your professors also learn from your questions. Please don't be shy about asking.

With all classes online, SGA online, activities ranging from TikTok to yoga online, the Oxley Integrated Advising Program online, counseling services online, campus ministry online, and all College offices functioning online, we are replicating the Mount experience as completely as we can for the balance of spring term. We are told to expect things to become somewhat more normal at some point over the summer. We hope for this, and we are planning for it. But we also must anticipate other scenarios. With so much uncertain, and the seriousness of the current situation in our state and in our city, it is only prudent to prepare for a range of possibilities; so we will. Still, Summer Session offerings will be posted soon. They will be largely online. And we are looking forward hopefully to Commencement in August. Many colleges and universities have canceled Commencement. We do not want to. We intend Commencement in August to be a celebration of our graduates and, in effect, the reopening of campus.

We are looking ahead optimistically and with confidence, but we also have many challenges. The College's finances are a major challenge, both now and in the months ahead.

The College saves some money by closing the campus, but it does not save much. That is because 62 percent of the College's operating budget is salaries, wages, and benefits. Contrary to impressions, it is not less expensive to teach online than in a classroom. When a professor is teaching online, it costs as much as it does when s/he is teaching in front of a room. When an athletic team cannot practice or play, we may save a few dollars on supplies or officials, but the salaries are unchanged. When buildings are unused, they still must be heated and maintained. The campus still needs insurance and security.

I am a heartsick that we have had to furlough most of our food service workers. It is terrible that our least well-paid employees are already bearing the brunt of this crisis. Those furloughs and, of course, food savings, make possible the \$800 credit that most returning students will receive this Fall. Something comparable will be created for graduating seniors. But still, I need to point out, that it is not possible to return money that the College has never received. Resident Assistants who are compensated in part with room and board grants, cannot get a rebate. Seton

Scholars and recipients of other scholarships that cover room and board cannot get a rebate. And students who are still in residence cannot get a rebate.

Expenses have gone down only slightly, but revenue has gone down quite a bit. For example, a new cohort of accelerated nursing students cannot start this spring. Over coming months, the College will thus not receive about \$1.8 million. We need that revenue. Similarly, the annual Scholarship Tribute Dinner cannot occur this fiscal year; we rely on that Dinner to help fund student financial aid. The ELS program will no longer be in residence. Outside events will no longer pay for the use of space. These examples illustrate that, while expenses remain high, income has gone down by millions of dollars. And as you know, all those non-tuition forms of income subsidize every student's education. They are the way that the College is able to fund and award financial aid.

The College's top budget priority always is financial aid. In answer to your questions, I want to assure everyone that the College will maintain its commitments to financial aid this spring. We still need for students and families to get their Pell and their TAP and take their loans and pay their bills, but we are of course not going to require families that are grappling with hardship and unemployment to do the impossible. Mount Saint Vincent is a college of opportunity, and that will not change. Students and their families who are facing hardship and unable to complete their payment plans should contact the [Office of Student Accounts](#) and schedule a phone appointment so that we can help you.

I want to make a similar promise about next year as well. Financial aid for our students will continue to be the College's top priority. When we admit you, we want you. It must be a realistic option for you to come here. I had the opportunity to work with several other presidents to get a healthy provision for independent colleges into the CARES Act. Before our efforts, the bill had only about \$230,000 for the Mount and its students. Because of our efforts, we have received a larger grant than ever before: more than \$3,000,000. Our challenges are much bigger than that, but it will help. I am proud that Mount Saint Vincent had a role in this success.

We have not yet received the regulations that will control what we can do with that money. I hope we will have latitude. However, I promise you that every dollar we are allowed to direct toward supplementary financial aid for returning and entering students we will direct there. The Financial Aid Appeals Committee is working on policies and procedures that we can implement over the summer. Even with

disappearing sources of funding, financial aid will remain the College's top priority.

Despite the worry and uncertainty surrounding this pandemic, admission for the Fall appears healthy. We cannot have Accepted Student Day and some other important recruitment events, but our dedicated team is creating an online smorgasbord of admission activities. We are hoping to hold some on-campus events over the summer, as well. I'd ask that faculty, student clubs, organizations, and teams take part when they can and maybe to have prospective student visitors at some online events. Every study we have ever done confirms, when prospective students meet you, they develop greater confidence that this place could be a second home, as well as a good school, and therefore that it is the college where they belong. With all the uncertainty facing families between now and August, we will all need to join together to help recruit and welcome our new students.

Some of you have asked about Aquino Hall. With the Governor's stop work order, we no longer believe it can be completed by January. The nursing laboratories can open when we get a Certificate of Occupancy, but we will plan for the residence hall part of the building to open in Summer 2021.

And finally, I want to acknowledge and thank the Board of Trustees for asking me to extend my term as President of the College through the end of the Fall semester. I was pleased to say yes. As I think you know, I am intensely proud of the accomplishments of our students and faculty and administrative staff. I am very proud of the culture of this college. People treat each other well here. We have our faults, at least I do. But as a community, we treat each other with the dignity and respect that every human being deserves. We help each other. We take authentic pleasure in each other's accomplishments. And we grieve with each other's losses. This College—this community—deserves our loyalty and dedication. We have accomplished great things together, and we will continue to do so. I think the response to this international and local crisis by our students, faculty, staff, and administrators, by our trustees and our alumnae/i, all testify to what is enduring and valuable here—what is most valuable is what we find in each other.

I look forward to being together again.

Peace and all good!

Thank you for listening.

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