



March 24, 2021

Dear Southwestern students, faculty, staff and community members,

The past year has been a time of upheaval and change for each of us and for our college. As you know, in March 2020 Southwestern closed its campuses to all but essential operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Like most Oregon colleges, we moved all classes online. We canceled all activities for our students living in college housing. We sent the majority of our employees' home to work remotely.

As the year progressed, our college embraced learning in ways none of our instructors, frontline staff or administrative workers ever imagined. Instructors taught each other new technology skills. Many students had their first experiences working with advisors online and learning in online classrooms. With the guidance of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), Oregon Health Authority, Coos Health and Wellness, and Curry County Public Health, the college created safety plans and procedures.

These safety practices helped us partially re-open health care, culinary and manufacturing labs for our professional technical students. Thanks to the selfless and dedicated efforts of students and staff, we have been able to provide housing and food services. Our athletes carefully returned to competition in winter 2021.

Beginning May 1, Oregon college employees are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccination. There is increasing availability and access to vaccines, which will continue through this spring and summer. The HECC has said vaccines might be made available for colleges this spring and to work with local health departments. As a result, Southwestern is in early discussion with county health officials about the possibility of providing immunizations for our students before students leave for summer. The college will update staff and students immediately if any clinics are scheduled. That brings us to Fall 2021.

Southwestern Oregon Community College plans to return to fully in-person/face-to-face classes on its Coos and Curry campuses for Fall 2021.

The decision to return to fully in-person classes will be made with the health safety of students and staff as the first priority. Other factors include the availability of classroom space and the ability of cleaning staff to meet OSHA and health department guidelines. For athletes to compete fall term, we expect students and coaches to comply with local health, NWAC and

NJCAA guidelines. For full housing use, Southwestern is committed to working with health officials to monitor the virus and provide quarantine space for students if needed.

I have been president at Southwestern since 2008. Since then, our college has had great success. Our students lead the state in completion. In September, we will open the new Umpqua Hall Health & Science Technology Building with modern, high-tech labs. And we are rounding the corner on overcoming our greatest challenge ever.

Please continue to wear face coverings. Wash your hands and get proper health care as needed. Limit social gatherings. And most importantly, the college encourages individuals to pursue safe and effective vaccination, as you are eligible. Pre-register for an immunization at the following: [Coos County](#) and [Curry County](#).

Our college is here for you. Together with your commitment to combat COVID-19, it is Southwestern's goal to fully open for in-person classes in Fall 2021. I look forward to welcoming you to our campuses.

Happy Spring Break,

Patty

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