Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

I am writing to provide an update on our plans for CentreTerm, which begins in four weeks at a time when we will likely continue to deal with what are expected to be extreme conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the surge in the spread of the disease, our Health and Safety Committee and the COVID-19 Crisis Management Task Force, with constant advice from public and medical health experts, have recommended several changes to how we conduct CentreTerm.

This message will provide basic information about the modifications we are making. Additional information and details will follow in the coming days from relevant offices at Centre and will be available through ongoing updates on our website’s Coronavirus Information Center.

As we considered the need to adjust our plans, I am grateful for the insightful conversations last week with faculty and staff, SGA student leaders, and international students, all of which contributed many excellent ideas and appropriate concerns. I feel more confident in choosing our path forward having heard from so many of you.

We have all seen the rate of COVID-19 transmission increase exponentially in recent weeks. With a record number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths since November, our health experts have informed us that we have to expect that the rate of transmission and the number of hospitalizations will continue to increase through the beginning of 2021. In Danville and across Kentucky, the positivity rate is now significantly higher than it was during the initial surge of coronavirus cases in the spring and summer, and our local and regional hospitals and health care facilities are currently at record capacity numbers.

Protecting the health and safety of our Centre community is our number one priority as we plan for CentreTerm and the spring semester. In consultation with our experts, we have determined that we need to de-densify the campus during Centre Term, with 50 percent or fewer of our students living on campus, and we must move most of our classes in January to a remote-only format.

On a more positive note, we do anticipate that the rate of COVID-19 transmissions will be significantly better by early February. Thus, we expect that all students who want to live and learn at Centre for the spring semester will be able to move to campus during the first week of
February. By having fewer students on campus during CentreTerm, we have been advised that we will have a better chance to avoid a campus shut-down next month as we deal with a record wave of COVID-19 infections and the worst period of the cold and influenza season.

As noted, additional information will be sent later this week from the relevant offices at Centre. For now, here is the key information about the changes we need to make to provide the best opportunity for a safe CentreTerm and a successful beginning of the spring semester:

• Most CentreTerm classes will now move from being taught in a hybrid mode to being taught all remotely. A limited number of labs and studio classes will still be taught in a hybrid mode, but most students should expect to have their CentreTerm class taught online.

• We are initiating a staggered return to campus, with a maximum total capacity of 50 percent of students living at Centre in January due to the surge of positive cases and the pressures on regional medical services. Students who usually return to campus early or stay on campus during breaks will return in the first move-in period, beginning on January 4. This group will include RA’s, some student leaders and scholar-athletes, international students, and students who have extenuating circumstances and are approved for early move-in. More students will be able to return to campus during the subsequent weekends, and we expect all students will be allowed to return by early February.

• Our campus facilities and dining services will be open for those who move in during the staggered January dates, but most students on campus will need to take their CentreTerm class online.

• We will continue to support all of our students who are learning remotely during CentreTerm.

In the coming days, information tailored to the circumstances of specific groups of students will be sent by email. For example, scholar-athletes will be provided information about when they will be able to return to campus on the staggered move-in schedule during January and early February. Students with extenuating circumstances who want to request to move to campus during CentreTerm will also be sent additional information about the necessary form to fill out.

Please note that students who have already reported that they are not returning to campus for CentreTerm should not be impacted by this decision and do not need to take any further action.
The next 10 days at Centre will be taken up with making the necessary adjustments for these changes. I ask everyone’s patience as we pivot to online classes, a staggered move-in schedule, and a de-densified campus in January. Our commitment to transparency abides, and you can expect the same level of thorough communication about our efforts as we head into the holidays and the new year. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we will host Zoom forums later this week —one for students and another for parents and families—as more specific information becomes available.

I realize that you may be directly impacted by these changes, and I sincerely apologize for any inconvenience or disappointment. I remain extremely grateful for your understanding and the trust you have shown in us as our Health and Safety Committee and the COVID-19 Crisis Management Task Force help guide our revised plans for a safe return to campus.

It is regrettable that we find ourselves, once again, with a need to appeal to everyone’s flexibility and good will to adapt to a new set of challenges presented by the pandemic. With the recent good news about vaccines and the prospect of a coordinated national strategy for pandemic response, however, I very much hope that the worst will soon be behind us. When we reconvene in February, I am optimistic that we will have a much brighter outlook for the coming spring, summer, and next fall.

In the meantime, I wish you and your loved ones health, safety, hope, and joy for the holiday season.

Sincerely,
Milton