



# Planning for Fall 2020

Report of the Carleton University Scenario Planning (CUSP) Working Group May 11, 2020

# Planning for Fall 2020

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### Introduction

### **Mandate of the Working Group**

Reporting to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and the President and Vice-Chancellor, the Carleton University Scenario Planning (CUSP) Working Group was tasked with looking at all options for a successful Fall term in light of the current public health crisis. An important part of this mandate was to engage in consultations with a broad forum of stakeholders including, among others, representatives from Faculties, unions, and student leaders.

The consultations and analysis focused primarily on academic programming as distinct from campus re-opening or research continuity. Indeed, the progressive re-opening of the campus and research facilities will follow a different timetable, to start progressively this summer, as soon as public health guidelines and government regulations permit.

### **Working Group Composition**

- Lorraine Dyke, Deputy Provost (Academic Operations and Planning) Chair
- Benoit-Antoine Bacon, President and Vice-Chancellor (Ex officio)
- Jerry Tomberlin, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) (Ex officio)
- Chuck Macdonald, Dean of the Faculty of Science
- Pauline Rankin, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
- Patrice Smith, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
- Sandra Crocker, AVP Strategic Initiatives and Operations (Research)
- David Hornsby, AVP (Teaching and Learning)
- Janice O'Farrell, AVP (Enrolment Management)
- Bruce Winer, AVP (Institutional Research and Planning)
- Kim Hellemans, COU Academic Colleague
- Jamie Carmichael, Associate Registrar, Scheduling and Systems
- Angela Marcotte, Controller, Financial Services
- Justin Mihalic, Planning Manager, Office of the Deputy Provost

### **Invited External Experts**

To better understand epidemiological, political and academic implications of the various scenarios under consideration, the Working Group directly consulted with the following resource persons:

- David Lindsay, President, Council of Ontario Universities
- Dr. Erling Rud, Scientist-in-Residence, Carleton University
- Alex Usher, President, Higher Education Strategy Associates

The Council of Ontario University (COU) and Universities Canada also provided access to sector specific polling data.

The Working group also considered a number of scientific articles, public polling data and opinion pieces. A partial list is included at the end of this document.

# **Guiding Principles**

In goes without saying that any response to the current health crisis will continue to first and foremost follow guidelines from public health authorities and government regulations.

In addition, prior to formulating recommendations regarding the fall term, the Working Group developed a set of principles to further guide decision-making. These principles were shared throughout the consultation process and were well received.

In responding to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and planning for fall 2020, Carleton University will use the following guiding principles in decision-making.

- 1. We will place the health and wellbeing of students, staff, faculty, and the broader community above all other considerations.
- 2. We will continue to provide the best possible learning experience for our students throughout the pandemic.
- 3. Decisions regarding modes of learning within given constraints will be driven by learning outcomes.
- 4. Student support services will continue to be delivered in accordance with our Service Excellence standards.
- 5. Equity across student groups will be a key factor in decisions.
- 6. Research activity will be maximized to the extent possible.
- 7. We will foster collaboration within the university and with peer institutions to create and share academic programming where possible to enhance academic quality.
- 8. Decisions will consider both immediate needs and the long-term success of the university.
- 9. We will provide as much certainty as possible to students, faculty and staff by making and communicating decisions as early as possible.

# **Epidemiological Evidence and Public Health Restrictions**

# **Epidemiological Evidence**

We are facing a worldwide pandemic. At the time of writing, over 4,000,000 people around the world have contracted the virus and over a quarter of a million have died. In Canada, the number of cases has now reached 70,000 and almost 5,000 have died.

COVID-19 is a highly transmissible virus and asymptomatic transmission makes the virus more difficult to contain. Researchers have developed a variety of models to predict the course of the pandemic and none of these models, to our knowledge, anticipate a rapid end to the pandemic. Furthermore, different models using different assumptions and run on data from different jurisdictions all suggest the likelihood of a second and subsequent waves of illness.

The primary hope for curtailing the virus is the development of a vaccine; however, it is unlikely that this would occur in the short term. Vaccine development and mass production normally take significantly longer than the 12 to 18 months which have been suggested in the media. As an interim measure, some people are looking to "immunity passports" to allow us to return to normal social interaction. An "immunity passport" relies on blood tests to determine whether someone has been exposed and developed antibodies to the virus. Those with COVID-19 antibodies would be considered immune and would be exempt from isolation and social distancing requirements. Unfortunately, immunity passports appear unlikely in the near term as tests for immunity are currently not sufficiently reliable.

#### **Public Health Restrictions**

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, the Ontario provincial government released *A Framework for Reopening our Province*. It outlines a three-phased process for gradually lifting public health restrictions but does not stipulate the timetable under which this will take place. The *Framework* suggests the following conditions will be required for a reduction in restrictions:

- Sustained reduction in cases,
- Hospitals are able to treat all patients without a reduction in care,
- Capacity to test all people with symptoms.
- · Capacity to trace contacts for all confirmed cases, and
- Sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment.

Even as public health restrictions evolve, the *Framework* suggests that the following restrictions will continue:

- Social gatherings will be limited in size,
- Physical distancing measures will be required,
- Telecommuting will be encouraged to the extent possible, and
- Vulnerable populations (e.g. those with underlying health conditions) will be encouraged to continue isolation.

The *Framework* stipulates that restrictions are expected to "continue until the post-pandemic period when a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19 is available." This approach is described as Ontario's "new normal."

# **The University Context**

Universities resemble small, compact cities. The Carleton community is comprised of nearly 40,000 individuals working and, in some cases, living in a concentrated space. Research using network analysis at other universities suggests that university students are highly interconnected. Instead of the proverbial six degrees of separation which reflect societal interconnections, university students appear to be only two links away from any other student. This interconnectedness facilitates transmission of viruses.

Different groups of students face significantly different constraints and opportunities in completing their university education. In planning for the Fall Term, four groups of students need to be considered:

- Domestic students residing locally (41% of Carleton's 2019-20 undergraduate and graduate students),
- Domestic students residing at a distance (44%),
- Returning international students (10%), and
- New international students (5%).

Face-to-face participation in the fall of new (and some returning) international students is likely to be problematic due to several issues outside of our control. Challenges include the postponement of qualifying exams in some jurisdictions, stalled visa administration, travel restrictions, and quarantine requirements.

Social distancing requirements which are likely to be in force for the Fall Term will have a significant impact on classroom capacity. A review of selected classroom configurations suggests that classroom capacity would be reduced to between 15% and 20% of normal capacity under 2-metre physical distancing norms.

At the time of writing, most universities in Canada and abroad are engaged in scenario planning exercises similar to our own. While few have announced concrete plans, it is increasingly understood across the sector that, in the words of University of Montreal Rector (President) Guy Breton (8 May, 2020): "Almost all Canadian and American Universities are starting to prepare for a Fall that will be mostly online."

### **Potential Fall Scenarios**

Scenario planning was the main focus of the Task Force and we have adopted a thorough approach, looking at all creative possibilities for the Fall semester,

The following 18 scenarios reflect four major approaches to delivery:

Face-to-face (full or restricted access)

Face-to-face with shifting of the term

Mixed face-to-face and online delivery (for all courses or by course, group or residency)

Fully online

#### **Face-to-Face Scenarios**

#### **Normal Fall Term**

A normal fall term would involve face-to-face classes for all but a few courses that are normally offered online and these would occur following the normal academic schedule. In order for Carleton to serve all current and prospective students under this scenario, all social distancing, mobility and travel restrictions would need to be lifted. A second wave of COVID-19 would significantly disrupt programming under this scenario.

### **Targeted Curriculum**

This approach would reduce the number of courses offered to limit campus density and prioritize support resources. Carleton could focus on core courses, signature experience courses or those more easily adapted to multiple modalities. This would require a severe limitation on the number of courses and students, which would seriously impair students' ability to complete their programs.

#### **Block Plan**

In this scenario, students would take fewer courses in short (3-4 week) blocks to facilitate an easier pivot away from face-to-face if required. This scenario would require a complete overhaul of curriculum that is not feasible in the current time frame.

**Risks:** These scenarios depend on restrictions being lifted, which is beyond our control. All of these scenarios are subject to the risk of a second wave, which would require a pivot to an online delivery mode.

# **Face-to-Face with Shifting of the Term**

#### **Compressed Term**

In a compressed term, face-to-face classes would begin when restrictions are lifted. Carleton would need to decrease the number of weeks of instruction and/or shorten the exam period to finish the term on time. It may be difficult to meet learning objectives under this scenario and a compressed term is likely to increase student and faculty stress. There is also a significant risk of having to cancel the term if restrictions are not lifted in time.

#### Partial Shift in Term

A partial shift in the term dates would involve beginning face-to-face classes when the restrictions are lifted and running the term for its normal length. There is a risk that the term could be cancelled if the restrictions are not lifted in time and it would significantly impact the delivery of subsequent terms.

#### Shift in Academic Year

Under this scenario, "Fall" and "Winter" terms would be delivered from January to August 2021. This would delay some students' program completion. Also, if other institutions are not shifting the academic year, this could be place Carleton at a competitive disadvantage. This risk could only be mitigated by substantial institutional collaboration which appears unlikely at this time.

Risks: All of these scenarios create significant uncertainty and risk to program continuity.

### **Mixed Delivery for All Courses**

#### Start Online and Pivot to Face-to-Face

This approach would involve starting all classes online and shifting to face-to-face teaching when restrictions are lifted. The biggest challenge here is that students may have difficulty returning to campus part-way through the term (due to accommodation challenges, travel restrictions, quarantine requirements etc.) and/or students may feel unsafe returning to a face-to-face environment.

#### Start Face-to-Face and Pivot to Online

In this scenario, courses would begin face-to-face but Carleton would be prepared to go online at short notice in the event of a second wave of COVID-19. The resulting disruption to students' living arrangements could impair student success if such a pivot were required. Further, there would be a potential risk to the health of the campus community.

#### **HyFlex Model**

A HyFlex model would mean that courses would be delivered face-to-face and online simultaneously by the same instructor. The purpose of this model is to allow rapid pivots; however, implementing this model would require that a sufficient number of students choose online study in order to meet social distancing requirements on campus. This scenario relies exclusively on synchronous learning, which is more resource-intensive and is not the preferred online pedagogy of students.

**Risks:** All of these scenarios are predicated on pivots that will cause significant disruption during the term and require additional preparation.

# **Mixed Delivery by Course**

#### Mixed Delivery by Size of Class

In this scenario, small classes would be offered in a face-to-face format and large classes would be delivered online.

### Mixed Delivery by Learning Objectives

This approach would use criteria, such as centrality to program or experiential learning goals, to prioritize courses that would be offered in a face-to-face format, leaving all other courses to be delivered online.

#### **Modified Tutorial Model**

A modified tutorial model would involve offering common online lectures, complemented by small face-to-face tutorial sessions or labs.

**Risks:** All of these scenarios risk that students may choose not to return to campus for a limited number of face-to-face courses or because they do not feel safe studying in a face-to-face environment. Further, a pivot to online course delivery may be required in the event of a second wave of COVID-19.

### **Mixed Delivery by Group**

#### **First Year Intensive**

In this scenario, first-year students would participate in face-to-face classes and activities and all other students would participate in online courses.

### **Graduate Students Only**

This approach would mean that only graduate students would return to campus for face-to-face classes in order to support research continuity. All undergraduate students would study online.

#### By Major

This scenario would mean that Carleton would offer face-to-face classes in selected programs only, such as those with experiential learning needs or where more students are local so that potential disruption is minimized.

**Risks:** These scenarios risk that students may choose not to return to campus and/or that a pivot to online learning is required due to a second wave of illness. These scenarios also pose equity issues.

# Mixed Delivery by Residency

#### Students in Residence, Learning Virtually

In this scenario, students would return to campus to participate in co-curricular activities where social distancing can be implemented, but all courses would be taught online.

#### Low-Residency Model

This model, which is common in blended-learning programs, involves students coming to campus for intensive face-to-face experiences and then returning home to complete the remainder of the term online. Since physical distancing requirements would make it impossible to bring all students to campus at once, this would have to be carried out in successive waves requiring significant coordination across all programs.

**Risks:** These scenarios risk that students may choose not to return to campus and/or that residency is disrupted due to a second wave of COVID-19. Further, there may be capacity challenges under these scenarios.

# A Fully Online Term

As with the other scenarios, there are benefits and challenges associated with a fully online term. Delivering all courses online would minimize health risks to the campus community and would mean that academic operations would not depend on public health restrictions being lifted at a specific time. It would eliminate a possible need to pivot part-way through the term due to a second wave of COVID-19. If all courses were online, students who may have challenges

returning to campus or who may be unwilling to return, can study without being on campus. This approach also provides certainty around requirements and continuity.

The main challenge to an online term is supporting the development of a fully online high-quality curriculum, which would be both time and resource intensive. Other challenges include the need to adapt approaches to student retention and success and meeting experiential learning requirements such as those in studios, labs, and graduate research.

#### A Note on Enrolments

The views of students and parents in the face of the current public health crisis vary greatly and all scenarios presented represent enrolment risks. When surveyed, a significant proportion of students (and even more so parents) would not be prepared to come back to campus physically until a vaccine is found. Conversely, a proportion of students (though less so parents) would consider a gap year if the term is online in the Fall. Mixed models are also problematic as they do not offer certainty and – depending on the exact model – are likely to favour certain student groups and to disadvantage others.

University enrolments typically expand when the labour market is unfavourable, and this may explain our healthy enrolments in the summer term. The current situation, however, is unprecedented and it is very difficult to anticipate what impact the pandemic will have on enrolments for the Fall Term.

### **Consultations**

The background information and scenario analysis presented here were shared with almost 20 groups and over 300 people across campus. Preliminary thoughts on fall planning were shared with Carleton's Senate and Board of Governors. Consultations were held with student leaders, union leaders, academic leaders and the main committees tasked with COVID-19 planning (Operations, Academic Continuity and Steering). Discussions were also held with key units such as Research, the Library, Student Affairs and Residences.

### **Highlights of Consultation Feedback**

- Faculty should retain the flexibility to adopt the most appropriate pedagogical methods within the constraints of the situation.
- Instructors and pedagogical support services such as Teaching and Learning Services and the Library need as much time as possible to prepare for online programming.
- A move to online teaching is an opportunity to review our pedagogy and learning outcomes.
- Developing online courses will require faculty to spend more time on teaching and will impact research productivity. Some adjustment of expectations may be required.
- We will need to provide extensions for faculty and graduate students whose research has been disrupted by public health restrictions.
- If restrictions are lifted, we can open up the campus for some activities but these should be enhancements to programming not mandatory activities so as not to disadvantage students learning at a distance.
- Many students, faculty and staff are nervous about returning to face-to-face interactions.
- International students will have to deal with different time zones when accessing courses or connecting with other students.
- Graduate students need to have access to campus. This should be a priority in terms of their research needs, program completion and the need for teaching assistants for the undergraduate program. For many graduate students, research *is* their education.
- We should give consideration to investments in additional teaching assistants who can provide support to our undergraduate students.
- Our international graduate student teaching assistants play an important role in delivering our undergraduate programs. If they are not able to enter the country, we should explore the possibility of employing them at a distance.
- Building relationships and community in an online environment will be important.
- We need to ensure that we continue to provide mental health supports.
- We need to ensure that students have access to the necessary technology.
- Staff training regarding social distancing protocols will be required in service areas such as the Library.
- Some students will continue to need space in residence. Accommodating dining services for this group may require the use of some conference spaces.
- When international students are able to return to campus, they will be required to quarantine for 2 weeks. This has implications for any return to face-to-face instruction and for residences.

# **Recommendations Going Forward**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve in Ottawa, in Canada and around the world and it is very difficult to predict what the situation will be in September 2020. Nonetheless, it seems likely that the current public health crisis will be ongoing, and that social/physical distancing measures and restrictions on international travel will remain in place.

The following recommendations establish a road map for preparing for the Fall Term under these circumstances. It draws a distinction between the progressive resumption of campus activities and the delivery of academic programs, as these are separate processes that are likely to follow different timetables.

Over the spring and summer, some on-campus facilities such as research labs with specialized equipment, the Library and student services are expected to re-open in a phased manner – following safety protocols – as public health restrictions permit. Academic programming will follow the regular academic calendar in the Fall.

In line with the nine guiding principles outlined by the Working Group, the recommendations prioritize the safety and wellbeing of our community, our academic mission, the needs of our students, equity across groups, and the need for decisions that are both timely and future-oriented.

1. While it might be possible to deliver some academic programming on campus by September, given the uncertainty regarding the course of the pandemic, we recommend that Carleton intensively prepare for the likelihood that courses and programs for Fall 2020 will be delivered online.

The exact course of the pandemic and of public health restrictions cannot be predicted at this time; however, prohibitions against large gatherings and social distancing requirements will likely continue for an extended period. Further, travel restrictions and quarantine requirements would make it difficult for many students – particularly international students – to access courses taught in-person creating inequities in access. Finally, various models of the progress of COVID-19 predict second and subsequent waves of illness which could put our community at risk in the fall. Unless the situation changes, it will not be feasible to teach most courses in-person due to health considerations and capacity limitations. Being prepared to deliver our programs online protects the health of our community, ensures continuity of our programs and fosters equity for all students, regardless of current residency.

2. We recommend prioritizing access to research facilities, in compliance with public health guidelines, as restrictions allow.

Specialized research facilities, as well as the Library, should progressively re-open as restrictions allow in order to support research continuity. Compared to classrooms, research labs are low density and it will be possible to configure and schedule them in ways that ensure compliance with public health guidelines and the safety of faculty and graduate student researchers. Priorities and protocols for reopening research facilities will be established by the Office of the Vice-President (Research). The Library building will reopen in phases with adjustments to the delivery of services and collections to align with public health guidelines. Throughout this period, telecommuting will continue to be encouraged to the extent possible. These processes will be guided by public health guidelines and the recommendations of the Carleton Working Group on Safe Return to Work.

3. We recommend that high-quality student services continue to be offered online, and that they resume in-person once public health guidelines and government regulations allow.

With many students likely to study at a distance from Carleton, it is important that they have online access to high-quality student services such as advising, counselling and career guidance. At the same time, students who are resident in the local area may prefer in-person interactions for services such as counselling. A mixed delivery model maximizes the support available to all students.

4. We recommend the creation of new online social spaces for students, faculty and staff to foster a sense of community.

One of the advantages of in-person instruction is the opportunity for students to connect with each other and with faculty. These connections enhance learning, build community and often form the basis of social supports that are known to enhance student well-being. Carleton currently offers a number of online social spaces for students such as chat groups, international social hour, fitness classes and e-sports tournaments. We need to think creatively and build on best practice to develop online analogues to other social spaces. We should engage our student societies as partners in this effort. In particular, first year students should receive special attention as they will not yet have had the opportunity to form social groups through on-campus interactions. Similarly, we need to find ways to provide online social spaces for faculty and staff in addition to current online healthy workplace initiatives and question and answer sessions.

5. With academic programming online, we recommend that on-campus learning activities be limited to optional programming – with the exception of graduate student research requiring on-campus facilities.

Even when public health restrictions are eased and student activities on campus are possible, these activities should focus – for most students – on enhancements to programming rather than required learning activities. This will ensure that students learning at a distance, either in Canada or abroad, are not disadvantaged in the advancement of their studies. An important exception to this principle would be graduate students requiring access to campus research facilities. For these students, research is an essential component of their education and access to campus facilities is necessary for them to complete their degree.

6. We recommend that student access to technology be a priority.

With all of our teaching and learning taking place online, it will be important that our students have access to computers and stable internet connections. The re-opening of computer labs – with appropriate social distancing and cleaning – should be prioritized once public health restrictions are reduced. In the interim, other alternatives such as expanded loan programs or assistance with computer purchases should be explored.

7. We recommend that central technological and pedagogical support to course instructors be increased, and that faculties and departments designate online teaching mentors.

While recognizing the autonomy of faculty to determine the most appropriate online pedagogy for their learning objectives, we encourage the sharing of best practices both within and across disciplines. Carleton's Teaching and Learning Services already plays a central role in creating communities of teaching practice. This work needs to continue to be well supported in light of the additional demand on their services. In addition, many Carleton faculty have extensive experience with online education. We should encourage and support these faculty members to serve as mentors for instructors who have less online experience.

8. We recommend that residences be adapted to meet social distancing requirements and remain open for students who require campus accommodation.

Some students – including, but not limited to, international students who have remained or returned to Canada, domestic students from coast to coast who have opted to be close to campus, and graduate students doing research in labs on campus – will seek residence accommodation. Residence spaces should be prioritized for these students and adapted in accordance with guidelines from public health authorities.

9. We recommend that the Carleton University Scenario Planning (CUSP) Working Group continue to support planning and implementation of academic programming throughout the pandemic.

Every part of our campus community has a role to play in continuing our mission during the pandemic. CUSP will continue to support this work by conducting environmental scanning, examining options, adjusting recommendations as needed, and initiating the collaborations required to implement these recommendations. We expect that CUSP will remain engaged with this mandate throughout the upcoming academic year. For instance, CUSP will carefully consider evolving technologies (such as testing and tracing) to determine whether and how these could support our operations.

10. We recommend that an additional Working Group be established to look at how the pandemic and associated pivot to online learning and a virtual campus may shape our academic and research mission going forward.

While we address the operational challenges arising from the current situation, we also need to think about the longer-term horizon. We need to understand the implications of this crisis with a view to identifying future opportunities. How will this experience change the landscape of university education? Are there innovative pedagogical, research, and leadership approaches that have emerged as a result of this crisis that could foster future success? The goal of this Working Group would be to incorporate the lessons from our current experience into our vision of the future. Through reflection and imagination, we can ensure that Carleton emerges out of the current crisis stronger and more relevant than ever.

# **Selected Readings**

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