

Update from Dean Michael T. Cahill on COVID-19 Response

March 16, 2020

I write with a further update regarding our plans this semester in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. As you may know, [the CDC issued a Guidance yesterday](#) that recommends avoiding gatherings of 50 or more people for at least the next eight weeks (i.e., until at least the second full week of May). While the Guidance notes that it “does not apply to the day to day operation of organizations such as schools, institutes of higher learning, or businesses,” its spirit and substance clearly counsel that we seek to minimize group activity on campus for the balance of the semester, as described in further detail below.

Classes. All classes will be conducted remotely for the remainder of the semester. Students in clinics and externships will receive individual guidance from their supervising faculty members or attorneys about how to fulfill their responsibilities. Further guidance will follow regarding final exams, which are also likely to be conducted remotely.

Please rest assured that we are making certain to carry out all aspects of our educational program, including clinics and externships, in a manner that will satisfy the demands of the regulatory bodies that oversee us (specifically the ABA and the New York Court of Appeals). We will do nothing to threaten your ability to sit for the bar and gain admission to practice.

We have not yet reached a decision about whether summer classes will be offered as usual, cancelled, or taught remotely. We will provide an update about the summer schedule by early April.

Events. All on-campus events through at least May 10 are cancelled. We will follow up later regarding which of those events will be rescheduled for another date.

We have not yet determined whether commencement, or other surrounding events that week, will be able to go forward as planned. We will provide an update by early April.

Housing. As earlier messages have stated, we strongly recommend that if you are able to stay elsewhere once classes resume next week, you should. Although we are not aware of a concrete elevated risk in our vicinity, dense urban environments like downtown Brooklyn do not easily lend themselves to the degree of social distancing recommended in the current situation.

At the same time, we do not plan to close our residences. Feil Hall and 148–50 Clinton are apartment-style residences. Typical campus dormitories are designed for a level of communal living (shared bathrooms, lack of separate kitchens, etc.) that necessitates frequent intimate interaction and thus presents elevated risks. By contrast, students in our residences are situated in more self-contained units.

Bear in mind, though, that apartment living is still relatively close-knit and warrants precautions to maintain safety and reduce risk. As noted in an earlier message, we strongly encourage residents to avoid having guests or visitors if possible. If you do plan to have guests or visitors, please notify Fortune Attardo in advance so that we will be informed about our community's encounters with others.

Facilities and on-academic services. Both students and employees are encouraged to interact remotely (by phone, e-mail, etc.) if possible. In-person meetings will be available by appointment when necessary, but students and employees should work remotely to the extent they can. As noted before, the main building will remain open for students to use study spaces, but please practice appropriate social distancing when doing so. Public safety officers and facilities staff will continue to ensure the safety, routine operation, and enhanced cleaning of all of our buildings.

In an effort to encourage online, rather than in-person interaction, student access to 111 Livingston will be restricted until further notice. A public safety officer will be stationed on the 20th floor lobby of this building between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. Meetings outside of these hours will require a faculty or staff member to meet the student or other individual in the floor lobby.

Thanks, as always, to everyone for doing your part to keep our community safe and healthy.