

Town Hall Q&A

Answers are accurate as of August 20, 2020, and are subject to change.

Colleges and universities across the country are canceling their plans for an in-person semester, including institutions whose experts we have explicitly been drawing on (Penn, Jefferson, JHU). Why does Bryn Mawr feel confident that we can safely operate with students on campus this fall?

Bryn Mawr has engaged experts on our own campus – including those on the Operations Planning Group – in a rigorous process of discernment, advised by world-class experts on infectious disease, public health, and the COVID-19 pandemic, and strongly aligned with Haverford. Through this process, we have determined that what is right for large universities like Penn, Johns Hopkins, and others is not necessarily what’s right for Bryn Mawr College. We believe that Bryn Mawr (unlike large, urban schools) can undertake in-person operations this fall because we have:

- A relatively small number of students
- A studious, non-party culture
- Single rooms for all returning students
- Practice in managing a residential community during the pandemic (over the spring and summer) for a relatively large number of students compared with other institutions
- A strong and longstanding commitment to upholding community norms
- Capacity for testing
- A local area that is
 - seeing stable levels of community transmission
 - has significant capacity for patient care and for treatment options

Read the principles and processes that underlie our plans:

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety/principles-and-process>

Aerosolized transmission of the virus across great distances has been proven to be possible: how do we address this?

Since the beginning of our planning, the medical guidance we have been following has emphasized airborne transmission as a primary pathway for virus transmission. Our plans have been designed with this principle from the beginning, including assessment of air exchange through our HVAC systems. By requiring personal safety behaviors, especially masking and physical distancing, we will greatly if not entirely reduce this risk. Read more about the personal safety behaviors: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#safety>. Read more about campus modifications to address airborne transmission: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#campus-life>

Why does the College feel that we can manage educating our students to take care of themselves and one another?

We have planned many forms of regular communication, training, and outreach through the Dean's Office, the Dorm Leadership Teams, SGA, the Health and Wellness Center, and other areas. Our students are as concerned about protecting our community as our staff, and we will monitor the outcomes of these efforts closely and frequently, being willing to pivot and take action immediately if needed. Read an overview of our health education efforts:

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#health>

Why are we [staff] being told to come to campus when students and faculty get to choose whether they will be remote or not, when the Governor has said to work remotely if possible, and we have been working effectively from home?

During this period, many have expressed increased concerns around transmission on campuses, particularly in classroom settings. To meet our mission of access, students who cannot attend in person classes due to these concerns may study remotely. To meet this need, faculty will need to provide opportunities for remote instruction, so they are also able to teach remotely.

Staff are asked to work on campus at times because our campus is open for business. As a residential college, our business requires us to offer in-person services to resident students. While remote work has been effective as a temporary means of creating business continuity while we are not in session, total remote work is not a permanent option because it does not fully support our mission as a residential college. Therefore, we are working to balance opportunities for remote work with quality in-person services. Within this framework we are being mindful of the safety of staff as we provide opportunities for some remote work.

Read more about resources for staff: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/humanresources/tools-cope-covid-19>

I have been running masks for 40 minutes in a high heat dryer after using them. Is that sufficient, or do they actually need to be washed after each day they're used?

It depends on the kind of mask you have; check instructions if you have purchased your mask. In general, cloth masks should be washed with soap and water after each use. Typically, they are cleaned in a washer with regular detergent and dried in the dryer, though they may be air dried. Read more about the campus's mask policy:

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions#campus>

Why not also give everyone a lanyard or lapel clip to pin their mask to themselves? This eliminates putting the mask down onto surfaces (which is not advised) or inadvertently leaving it somewhere and being caught without.

The College is providing masks to those who work on campus. We can look into providing mask clips if there is strong demand. You are also welcome to wear your mask around your neck when you are alone in your office if your door is closed. Read more about the campus's mask policy: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions#campus>

If people are outside taking breaks, do they have to wear masks? Can people still smoke 25 feet from a building? Can staff eat inside during breaks?

All community members must wear a mask when they are in public. Masks must be worn outside if you will be encountering people (e.g., walking around on campus, sitting in a central campus area). If staff are able to smoke outdoors while remaining distant from others, they may continue to do that. If staff are able to eat in a private room with the door closed, they may do so. If staff eat outside, they should do so while remaining distant from others since they cannot wear a mask. Read more about the campus's mask policy:

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions#campus>

I was recently on campus and I saw many people not wearing masks. Many people are wearing buffs or nothing. Why is mask wearing not being enforced for people on campus now? I am not willing to get close enough to someone to remind them to wear a mask.

(Related: Are face shields available to staff that may come in contact with students or staff or faculty members who are not wearing mask?)

We are monitoring compliance and are addressing issues of non-compliance. We are ramping up our placement of signs reminding community members to wear masks. We are also embarking on a culture shift that requires everyone's support. We do not typically interfere with one another's choices, but we are asking all community members to push themselves in this area and to remind others – immediately, kindly, and with awareness of different constraints that may make compliance more difficult for some – to follow the safety expectations. Read more about the campus's mask policy:

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions#campus> and read more about efforts to create a culture of care: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety/culture-care>

Why is BMC's student arrival process and student testing policy so different than Haverford's? It seems that students should be tested before they come to campus to confirm that they don't have COVID. Could we require a student show documentation of negative test one week or less before their arrival to campus, for example. If they do test positive, they should be told to delay their arrival to campus.

(Related: Is the College assuming that we will have COVID-positive students on Day 1? We have students who come from all of the world. It's great that our local area is doing well, but we are bringing students from areas that are not doing well.)

(Related: Students from many states are expected to quarantine for 14 days when they arrive in Pennsylvania. It does not matter if they quarantined prior to arrival; they are still traveling to campus. But students are not all arriving by the 24th, which would be 14 days prior to the start of classes. If some classes start in person on September 8, are those students who arrived the 28th, for example, going to be quarantining until the 2nd week of classes? Or will they not be quarantining for 14 days?)

(Related: What if one of the students has the virus when they get here, and we don't know that they have it? Employees could get sick.)

There are many different viable strategies for testing. Bryn Mawr is using a sequential testing strategy. Our emphasis is on using testing for diagnosis and follow up of close contacts of positive cases.

In order to test students reliably before they come to campus, we would have had to ask them to get tested two weeks ahead of campus arrival, because of testing delays nationally. This means the tests could be as much as two weeks old and any asymptomatic positive cases would be past their 10-day isolation period, and thus safe to return. Symptomatic students will delay their arrival on campus with or without a positive test. This approach of quarantine and symptom monitoring minimizes the possibility of students spreading the virus as they travel to campus.

Instead of assuming that everyone who arrives on campus is COVID-negative, we have organized move-in on the assumption that some students and families may be COVID-positive, and we have put in place safety practices that will protect all community members and families even though there may be COVID-positive cases. The move-in plans have taken all local requirements into account.

We will do some surveillance testing of students during the semester that will allow us to track transmission on our campus. These testing protocols are important, as they augment the critical measure of community members consistently following health guidelines.

Read more about our testing and quarantining plan for students' arrival on campus:
<https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#testing-return>

Would it be possible to find out what communication goes out to students about mask usage, social distancing regulations, etc., so faculty and staff know what students have been told about these regulations?

Yes! These are online at <https://www.brynmawr.edu/sites/default/files/Student-Letter-Aug-12-20.pdf> AND <https://www.brynmawr.edu/sites/default/files/Student-health-agreement-Aug-13-20.pdf>

Will student workers be paid for their shifts if they have to call out with symptoms?

Yes! They will be paid for up to 70 hours of work. Read more at <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#asymptomatic-resident>

What are the plans for commuter students? If commuter students are being allowed to be guests of current students in the dorms, this seems like a source of potential infections.

Commuter students are being asked to follow the same guidelines as all community members, and we are taking steps to ensure that they are following these guidelines. Many students chose to live off campus before the global pandemic due to dietary issues, preference for personal bathroom, or medical issues. They deserve access to the campus in the same manner that all community members who abide by our guidelines do. Read more about our plans for commuter students at <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#asymptomatic-commuting>.

In the pivot plan it stated that to go from level 2 to 3 we need 7% of students or employees testing positive. Is there a plan to do random testing of employees?

(Related: As students are being tested when they arrive on campus, why are faculty and staff not being tested before returning? Why is there not a testing plan for those who will be interacting with students regularly -- Residence Life, Dining, and custodial staff -- to ensure they are not infected, in order to protect the employee, their colleagues, their families, and the students? How will we know if there is an outbreak among staff if we are not testing?)

Employees will be encouraged to get tested when symptomatic or when identified within the contact tracing process. As of this time, we will not perform random testing of employees. As more testing options become available, and as we monitor the campus, we will continue to re-evaluate our approach. You can read more about employee testing at <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#asymptomatic-staff>.

What does “surveillance testing” mean? If an estimated 30% of infected people are asymptomatic (as indicated by a Korean study reported in the New York Times last week), how will focusing only on symptoms and testing symptomatic students keep spread of the virus at bay?

Surveillance testing is a way to monitor the amount of transmission in the community. We will be testing students at intervals throughout the semester and reporting/acting on percent positives. You can read more about our testing plans at <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#testing-semester>

I have heard about plans for point of care testing of symptomatic individuals. Will we be able to obtain the necessary supplies?

We are working to obtain point-of-care testing machines so that we obtain the fastest possible results. One of the machines uses antigen testing. As of August 18, this form of testing is not subject to as many supply chain disruptions. Until we obtain these machines, we will partner with AFC for on-site and off-site test administration. We are not relying on testing to control the spread of the virus. Even without testing, if we follow our health practices, we can control the virus. Read more about our testing plans: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#testing-semester>

Back in July, when all staff had to complete the community agreement, it didn't appear we were provided a copy of the agreement. Could the College please provide us with the community agreement so that we can reference what it is we agreed to?

Yes! A sample agreement is online at https://www.brynmawr.edu/sites/default/files/Return-to-Campus-Agreement_2020-2021.pdf

As K-12 schools in the area are going remote, is there any flexibility for staff who are being asked to report to work but do not have childcare options at home?

Supervisors will be as flexible as possible while also ensuring that employees are able to complete their work. For more information, contact Marty Mastascusa in Human Resources.

As a younger, generally healthy staff member, I do not feel like I have the option to say something, even if I do not feel safe returning to campus. I have other colleagues who are older or have health concerns who are still willing to come in as has been requested by our supervisors. What can be done if I don't feel safe returning?

Talk to your supervisor about your concerns. For more information about general policies, contact Marty Mastascusa in Human Resources.

Is there a list of behavioral expectations for faculty and staff? We don't know what we don't know, so will there be a very granular list of expectations for faculty and staff? Examples: where to wear a mask (always except in a private office?) and how/when to quarantine if you have personal travel?

Details about behavioral expectations are available at <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#personal> and <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#testing-during>. If you have specific questions that are not addressed online, please raise them with your supervisor or our COVID Officer, Don Abramowitz.

Will there be a community culture of meeting remotely, even if individuals are on campus?

Yes, there will be a culture of meeting remotely wherever possible. If in-person meetings are needed they must occur either outside or in places with appropriate ventilation and capacity, and the necessary protocols of masks and social distancing should be observed.

Will staff who are continuously in close contact with students receive hazard pay? If not, why not?

We have initiated numerous health practices to keep close contact between community members to a minimum, even for essential staff. When following the safety practices, there should be little risk to interactions with students, faculty, or staff at Bryn Mawr College. Because these practices are now in place, we are no longer offering hazard pay. For more information, please contact Marty Mastascusa in Human Resources.

I would like to ask if, for legal and fiscal reasons, faculty who teach remotely should work from a specific location: the state of PA, the city of Philly, or their fiscal address? Or is there no particular restriction?

As always, employees are expected to live within commuting area of the College, which is an in-person operation. If you have concerns about your location as a faculty member, please contact Tim Harte; if you have such concerns as a staff member, please contact Marty Mastascusa.

In an earlier Town Hall, Kari shared dollar figures of how many students not attending equals in terms of drawing from our budget surplus. Can we get an overview of how the numbers came out?

(Related: Can you provide an updated breakdown of numbers for undergrads who are enrolling in the fall, broken down by those living on campus and those attending fully remotely?)

These figures change several times per day, so we cannot give an accurate number at this time. We do know that there will be substantial financial impact to the College from the pandemic, both for FY '21 and for several years after, due to the impact on the endowment and the potential impact on future enrollments. We are now working to develop a process for gathering community input on a plan to remediate the financial impact, and we will share that process – along with updates on the College's financial position -- soon.

For Kari: Do you have any dates by which we will know what our departmental budgets will be? It is very hard to know how to spend departmental dollars when we don't yet know where we are.

We do not have these dates yet, but please continue to spend departmental funds as needed on those efforts that are essential and that contribute to Bryn Mawr's mission. Discretionary funding should be paused until we make broader budget decisions.

I may have missed it but was there an announcement of salary increases this year?

In acknowledgment of the severe financial impacts of the pandemic to both families and to Bryn Mawr College, the College's tuition and room and board rates have been frozen at their 2019-20 levels. Potential salary increases have been deferred and, while unlikely, will be considered within the budget remediation process.

What are the plans for students (or faculty and staff) who fail to comply with requirements around masks, social distancing, travel off-campus, etc.? How is the College monitoring student movement? How will we know if students are violating the campus standards we have set? Will we really kick students who don't comply out of housing?

Community members who do not comply with requirements will be reminded of expectations; community members who refuse to comply after reminders will be told that they must leave campus or they will be removed from their jobs. Please see the Return to Campus Agreement https://www.brynmawr.edu/sites/default/files/Return-to-Campus-Agreement_2020-2021.pdf

Moving to level 2 has significant impact on the services offered by various departments on campus. Wouldn't it be better to assume level 2 now and move to level one if we don't have 3% with positive COVID tests?

(Related: At what point would an announcement be made that we are starting the semester at level 2? And how are the levels being communicated in general to students?)

(Related: What guidelines will the College follow about reporting or disclosing numbers -- not names or departments -- of any infections?)

(Related: Could the College create some type of online dashboard that is updated regularly with information about testing rates; positive and negative COVID testing results; and active COVID cases among students, faculty, and staff so that the community can be aware of the current state of the campus? Montgomery County, PA's dashboard could provide a good model for this: <https://data-montcopa.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/covid-19>)

(Related: The request for daily symptom checks makes sense as a way to confirm as a community that we are upholding community standards. However, it has not been transparent who has access to the data, who is reviewing the data, and what is happening with the results. Can these points be clarified? If we answer that we had contact with someone who has COVID, what will occur, other than being asked to stay home?)

(Related: Will the pivot plans be shared with students?)

A Bi-Co pivot plan and data dashboard will soon be published on the website. The data dashboard will include information in aggregate about compliance with the daily symptom

checks as well as other data points that can legally be shared publicly. While we are at level 1 or level 2, the dashboard will be updated weekly and featured in the weekly campus newsletter. If we reach level 3, the dashboard will be updated as frequently as possible and featured in the Daily Digest. Any operational changes will be communicated immediately to the full community via our emergency text system. You can see initial information about the pivot plan, which will be published when approved across the Bi-Co, here:

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety#pivoting>

What is our plan if large numbers of students, faculty, and staff get sick? We are small -- what if offices are completely unstaffed because of illness?

These contingencies are addressed in our pivot plan, which will be published in full when approved across the Bi-Co.

Given our dependence on Bryn Mawr, Lankenau, and Delaware County Memorial hospitals, what are our plans for emergency care of students (both COVID and otherwise) when these options are overwhelmed?

We are fortunate to have many excellent medical centers in the Philadelphia area, and these centers have a good capacity at present. Availability of hospital care is a data point within our pivot plan, which will be published when approved across the Bi-Co.

What if a student gets seriously ill, and as a result, she can't travel back home?

(Related: What if a community member dies? Faculty and staff will need training and protocols to deal with this.)

In cases of illness or death, the College will follow practices that predate the current pandemic.

Regarding contact tracing: How should we determine our contacts? Is it limited to people with whom we've had "close contact," as defined as 15+ minutes at a distance of <6 feet?

(Related: How in-depth should we be tracking in the notebook? Those we interact with for over 15 minutes or anyone we interact with regardless of the time frame we are with that person?)

A close contact is any person with whom you have interacted -- masked or unmasked -- for more than 15 minutes at a distance of less than six feet. Keep a daily record of all close contacts to ensure that the College is able to immediately identify, isolate, and test any individuals who may have been exposed to the coronavirus. Read more about contact tracing at <https://www.brynmawr.edu/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions#contact>

Would it be possible to set all of our buildings, or all buildings that are equipped for it, to card access? This would make it so that no non-BMC community members could get into our

buildings and it would also mean that there would, at least in theory, be a better record of who has been in which spaces, should we face a COVID outbreak on campus.

As compared to prior years, the College is modifying access to some buildings that currently have card access technology, particularly residence halls. We will not be making all spaces card-access only. For more information, please contact Director of Facilities Nina Bisbee.

What are the expectations for staff caring for and supporting quarantined students? Will there be daily tele-med check-ins, food deliveries, and other support services for sick students, and who will be performing these tasks? How will the quarantine dorm be cleaned, and if it is by internal housekeepers, what safety measures will be in place? Can the College contract with a Home Health Care Agency, so staff who aren't trained for this kind of work, don't have to perform duties outside their normal work?

Staff from the Health and Wellness Center will engage in daily virtual (phone or email or telehealth) check-ins with the students who are ill. The isolation dorm will be cleaned by an outside firm trained for that purpose. Food deliveries will be contactless to avoid transmission. For more information, contact Beth Kotarski at the Health and Wellness Center.

I was under the impression that staff who are sick or with symptoms and cannot work will still be paid as "COVID sick days." That message doesn't seem consistent across all staff members, particularly in housekeeping. Could we get clarification for all staff and what are the parameters? What is covered by a COVID day?

(Related: Would you expound on "COVID sick days"? Can we use the quarantine time before we dip into our accrued sick time? Or is it for if we run out?)

(Related: When will the allotted "COVID sick days" from Spring/Summer be appropriately reflected on the timesheets of hourly employees? Currently, we have been docked the hours taken in our sick time account, but have not been reimbursed based on the allowable "COVID sick days.")

The "COVID-19 sick days," up to 25 days in total, expired on August 1. These days could be used for other purposes besides illness, including lack of daycare and lack of work.

The College is providing staff with additional sick time going forward, in consideration of the additional need to use sick time associated with the daily symptoms check. The College does not want anyone coming to work because they are out of sick time, and no reported sick day will be unpaid. In order to prevent a negative balance, an initial allotment of additional sick time will be added to everyone's sick leave accrual. This will be reflected on the pay stub of hourly employees after adjustments for "COVID-19 sick days" use have been made.

"Quarantine payments" are made to a person who is asymptomatic and cannot come to work because she or he has either a) tested positive for COVID-19 or b) been exposed to someone

else who has tested positive for COVID-19. The quarantine period is two weeks. By contrast, sick time is paid to someone who is unable to work due to symptoms of illness, in accordance with the College Sick Leave Policy. If the illness extends beyond one consecutive week, the person may apply for leave under the College Short-term Disability Policy.

Adjustments to the sick leave accrual balance that appears on the pay stub of hourly employees could not be made until pay through August 1, the final day that "COVID-19 sick days" could be used, had been processed. This occurred on the pay dated Friday, August 14. This is a manual adjustment; Human Resources, with the assistance of Payroll, is in the process of calculating these adjustments.

For more information, please contact Marty Mastascusa in Human Resources.