

January 12, 2021

Dear families and students,

We are busy making preparations for the return of students to campus later this term. We continue to monitor pandemic conditions here and around the world, seek advice from medical experts including infectious disease specialists, and evaluate our plans. As has been the case throughout the pandemic, our plans are subject to change. But, at this time, we still anticipate welcoming students back to campus during the second week in February. In this communication, you will find important updated information on your specific date-of-return choices, how we will integrate students returning at different times, and what returning students can expect in their classes, activities, and social interactions. **We will host a Town Hall meeting at 6:30 p.m. ET, on Friday, Jan. 15**, so you can hear more from the deans and other campus leaders.

## Return Options

Students have the option of returning in mid-February for the final five weeks of winter term or in mid-to-late March for the spring term. Most families have already notified us of their plans, with the overwhelming majority of students planning to return in February. We appreciate the response so far, and also understand that some families need more time to decide. We share more specifics about return options below to help with those decisions and **ask families to commit for the winter and spring terms no later than Jan. 24** (an earlier deadline than Jan. 31, as shared in previous communications).

**Boarders electing to return in February** are able to choose to return on **Feb. 11, 12 or 13** through a sign-up process managed by the Dean of Students office. Please complete a new sign-up form (which will be forthcoming), even if you have completed the one previously sent. All students residing domestically and returning on one of these three dates will collect and mail a COVID saliva test on Feb. 4 that we will provide to them in advance of that date, and all boarders will quarantine at home for seven days prior to their travel date.

Upon arrival, students will receive an onsite rapid molecular test before registering or moving into dormitories, where they will undergo a further seven-day period of restricted activities, similar to but shorter in duration than the restrictions at the beginning of the fall term. After this period of restricted activity, we will return to less restrictive campus protocols similar to what we had in place by the end of the fall term, with more expansive in-person intramural athletics and music, theater and dance rehearsals, scheduled weekend activities, opened campus buildings for students to mingle, and visits within and across dorm units.

**Day students** are not subject to a formal quarantine, but are expected to begin their adherence to the school protocols for day students for a two-week period (see the **Student Guidebook**

in [ExeterConnect](#) and the [Parent Portal](#)) before returning to the campus community on Feb. 15.

**Boarders electing to return in March** may enter the community on either **March 13 or March 20**. March 13 is prior to the final week of winter term, so families should consider the impact of travel fatigue on the final few days of classes if making this choice. It has the advantage of allowing students to enter classes and community activities at the beginning of the spring term, having completed their quarantine period. Boarding students residing domestically will collect and mail a COVID saliva test on March 6 (for March 13 returns) or March 13 (for March 20 returns) that we will provide to them in advance of that date, and all boarders will quarantine at home for seven days prior to travel. Upon arrival, students will receive a rapid molecular test before moving into a separate quarantine space away from the dormitories, where they will undergo a further seven-day period of restricted activities. The on-campus quarantine will occur in our own quarantine unit, or at a local hotel under the supervision of Exeter employees and medical staff. They will not be permitted on campus until their quarantine period has ended, since February arrivals will already be in a less-restrictive phase.

**Families residing in New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts** who are planning a March 20 return and are able to make the trip from home to school by private transportation may elect to complete a full two-week quarantine at home instead of one week at home and one week in a school quarantine unit, as long as they complete a waiver and understand that they will be subject to daily symptom check monitoring by our health center staff in the second week of the quarantine period.

Similar to arrivals in February, **day students who plan to stay remote for winter term** and return for spring term are not subject to a formal quarantine, but are expected to begin their adherence to the school protocols for day students for a two-week period before joining the campus community for the start of spring term on March 23 (see the Student Guidebook available on ExeterConnect and the Parent Portal). These day students should collect and mail their COVID saliva tests on March 16.

You can find a [calendar here](#) with a summary of important dates outlined above.

**Please make your final selection for return options by Jan. 24**, in order to clarify your financial commitment and allow us to plan appropriately. Please look for an email from Lee Rollick later today with a link to the form for submitting or confirming your plans.

## Testing and Safety Protocols

**We are instituting twice-weekly COVID testing for our entire community.** We will continue to require face masks and follow our safe hygiene and distancing practices, and will maintain a closed campus, with our trails, paths and buildings unavailable to visitors, and our boarding students expected to stay on campus. Day students are not permitted to take paid employment,

participate in an outside team or other activity, and must follow the rules as laid out in the Student Guidebook. We ask for your patience and partnership in avoiding family visits in order to keep every member of our community safe. New Hampshire's vaccine rollout benefits from our small population, and many of our adults should be vaccinated in the coming months. Some already are. When conditions allow us to permit visits on campus, we certainly will!

## **In-Person Instruction**

Given our increased testing and experience from the fall term, **we are committed to building on the in-person instruction** that we started toward the end of fall term, with in-person classroom instruction being the dominant mode for the spring term. We plan to move toward that goal during the five-week winter period following student returns. To that end, most classrooms in Phelps Science and Phillips Hall and some classrooms in the Academy Building will be outfitted for in-person instruction by February. Of course, some teachers' individual health needs or care responsibilities will be accommodated as medically necessary, but most classes will typically meet in person in spring term, and we anticipate a substantial percentage will be in person during the final weeks of winter term.

Our winter term schedule is designed to accommodate in-person classes and we are working on additional changes for the spring term that will allow for even more focus on in-person classes here on campus, as well as allow for a day without academic classes every other week. As a consequence, the spring term may be less accommodating for students in some time-zones. It will not, for instance, include evening classes (U.S. time zones).

## **Athletics, Activities and Clubs**

We plan to move beyond our November ground rules as quickly and safely as we can. Our intention is that athletic competition during the winter term will be intramural, including game-like conditions with referees, and we hope for interscholastic competition during spring term. Dance, theater and music will have parallel ground rules, allowing for more in-person practice and performance. Boarding students will continue to remain on campus in order to limit interaction outside of the campus community, except for specific approved and supervised school activities.

Our deans and student activities team are already planning regular weekend social opportunities for students, following the input they received from students at the end of the fall term. Each weekend, we will host popular offerings like coffee houses, games in the field house, and movie nights. We will offer opportunities for outdoor activities each weekend, including, when the weather cooperates, outdoor skating and snowshoeing. We will open additional spaces for indoor dining and are especially mindful of needing to offer indoor gathering spaces for students to socialize. Routine and daily open hours will be available in multiple spaces, some of which will feature specific attractions, such as ping-pong tables in Grainger Auditorium and board games in the lobby of the Goel Center.

## **Between Terms**

**During the short break between winter and spring terms, March 18-22**, students will remain on campus. We will have no academic classes and will permit the February arrivals to participate in a variety of physical and social activities, and to recharge through rest. These may include some winter and spring activities in athletics and the arts. March arrivals will be quarantined at this time, although those arriving on March 13 will be able to join their dorm communities on March 20 and may be able to participate in the last few meetings of these activity options. Spring term classes will begin on Tuesday, March 23, 2021.

We are greatly looking forward to the vibrancy that our returning students will bring to our campus. While academic endeavors are continuing at dining tables, in living rooms and in home offices around the world, there is truly no replacement for the energy that we create when we are together. We look forward to hearing your choice about when your student will be with us, and we thank you for trusting them to our care.

Sincerely,  
William K. Rawson '71; P'08  
Principal