

Dear Friends,

With decisions from UNC-CH, NC State, and ECU to go to all-online instruction for undergraduates for the remainder of the fall semester, I know some of you are wondering about Meredith's decisions and plans. I understand, and while I never say never, I also want you to see the ways in which our situation is different and, thus, gives us more flexibility to make alternative decisions.

First, however, I want to remind you that the cause of these other institutions' moving exclusively to online instruction was based on the soaring number of COVID-19 cases and clusters, overwhelmingly caused by students' failure to comply with CDC, state, and healthcare guidance: wash your hands frequently, wear a mask, practice social distancing, and avoid large crowds. The reminder that alcohol oftentimes affects good judgment is another key to making good choices.

Now, as for our plans. We have followed all CDC, state, and city guidelines in preparing for returns and classes opening for instruction. In that vein, we have offered students and faculty and the majority of staff the option for returning to campus or working from home. We have adopted new cleaning protocols with backup services of an external cleaning force and a larger in-house temporary employment pool; made dining options more flexible; established social distancing in classes and the library and other spots on campus; allowed freshmen and sophomores to live off campus; allowed for private rooms at no extra charge; equipped classrooms with cameras and equipment for remote instruction; hired backup healthcare staff; set aside housing for affected students; maintained or established online options for services; initiated new security protocols and Campus Clear as a symptom check for those coming onto campus; and more. In these ways, we have reopened with significant new (and expensive) precautions in place.

Our plans for remaining on campus include daily reviews of numbers and conditions and healthcare guidance, and these plans look different for Meredith than for other larger institutions. For example, Meredith is significantly smaller than these other institutions and has far fewer students and more land area per student, meaning students have more

outdoor opportunities to socially distance and work on studies or be with friends, wearing masks and sitting apart. To date, we have had no clusters, and the overwhelming majority of tests have come back negative. While our population is smaller and our percentages in the range of other institutions, the scale or magnitude of possibilities is significantly different and gives us an added advantage—provided people continue to be wise about behaviors, attitudes, and selflessness.

If we were to have a significant outbreak, we would most likely do what Notre Dame has done and pivot to a temporary, two-week online instructional period that would allow us to re-assess after a 14-day “isolation” period. Students could leave their belongings on campus and anticipate a return (provided the data show that a return is safe) to complete the semester.

Of course, we certainly hope not to have to go to this plan, but I do want you to see that Meredith is not, at this point, pursuing the all-or-none scenario that other larger institutions have adopted.

Again, I remind you that it is our own good choices that will most likely drive whatever decisions have to be made.

Be safe and let’s get through this together!

President Jo Allen, ‘80

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**Jo Allen, President  
Meredith College**