



Office of the President

March 30, 2020

Dear Members of the Chestnut Hill College Community,

It is with a heavy, yet grateful and hopeful, heart that I send this letter. My heart is heavy from the devastating impact the coronavirus has had on our local and global community. The loss of life around our world is giving us all great pause. While this global impact cannot be minimized, I also want to acknowledge the grief and disruption in our own community as people adjust to a new normal that includes working from home, learning remotely, and not only homeschooling children, but caring for those who are unable to safely leave their homes. We acknowledge the many burdens that you carry and want you to know you are being held faithfully in prayer.

Despite these very real challenges, I also write with a heart full of gratitude and hope. I am grateful for the resilient spirit shown by our faculty, staff, and students as they have adapted to living and learning in a remote community of scholars. The creativity and innovation that has been a byproduct of this crisis will remain with us well into the future. I have seen the ingenuity that has grown from our community and know that this will lead to a bright future. I have also seen the spirit of our graduating students, who while understandably devastated by the reality of their final semester, are looking forward to future celebrations of their academic, athletic, and co-curricular successes.

When the Sisters of Saint Joseph gathered for our Chapter in Summer 2019, our theme included, “Eyes Open, Ears Attentive, and Spirit Alert.” In the spirit of eyes open to the reality around us and ears attentive to the guidance from the CDC, PA Governor Tom Wolf, and the Philadelphia Health Department, it seems impossible and irresponsible to return to normal campus operations this semester. I know this message is disappointing to many members of our campus community. If I am being honest, I am included in this group. We delayed a decision because our hopeful hearts believed it might be possible for us to reunite as a community of scholars. However, we also realize that in times of uncertainty decisions are needed, and so we have decided that the College will continue with remote operations until May 11, 2020. This decision includes postponing Commencement 2020 until a not yet determined date (as explained below).

Below are a series of decisions and announcements concerning the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester.

### **Online Instruction and the Spring Semester**

In consultation with state and local officials and in consideration of evolving guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control, **the College has determined that it is necessary for students, faculty, and staff to remain off campus for the remainder of the spring semester.**

As a result, all coursework will continue through online instruction for the remainder of the spring semester. Final examinations will also be administered online. Since each student's academic schedule is unique, further direction will be sent to you from our Office of Academic Affairs as well as College faculty regarding the completion of academic requirements for the rest of the semester. Expect to receive more information about final exams next week.

### **Graduation and Commencement**

For those students scheduled to graduate in May, please know that this change does not affect your graduation from Chestnut Hill College. Degrees will be conferred this May to all students who successfully complete their academic requirements.

**However, in order to comply with guidelines from the Pennsylvania Department of Health regarding large social gatherings, the undergraduate and graduate commencement ceremonies scheduled for this May must be postponed.**

Feedback from a recent student survey administered by Student Life made it abundantly clear to us that an on-campus commencement should take place. We are committed to re-scheduling this event to a time later this summer and celebrating your academic achievement as a College community. Conversations are already in progress to plan this much anticipated special event.

### **Residential Students**

Philadelphia has enacted a "stay at home order," so please do not come to campus to retrieve belongings from your residence hall. You will be receiving a separate email from the Office of Residence Life with specific details regarding scheduling appointments to retrieve your belongings; this information will be based upon an order from the Mayor and Governor and in keeping with your safety.

### **Credits & Refunds**

The College continues to seek guidelines from the Department of Education regarding possible credits and refunds for room and board. As mentioned previously, this guidance is necessary so as to better understand the implications toward student loans and accounts. I hope to be able to share more information on this topic with you soon.

### **Campus Operations**

Regarding campus operations, all faculty and staff are asked to continue to work remotely until further notice. Access to campus should be limited to only those critical business functions deemed necessary by your respective vice president.

I am aware of the significant distress many in our CHC Community face due to restrictions on work and travel. Please know that the College is here to support you in any way possible. Even though we are not physically together, the CHC family is here for you.

### **Summer & Fall Semester Instruction**

We hope to resume on-campus instruction and on-campus operations on Monday, May 11th. **Please note that the first week of SCPS & some SGS classes for Summer Session I, which begins May 4th, will be taught online.** We will continue to revisit this decision as the guidelines for COVID-19 evolve and we will communicate any changes to you as soon as possible.

I would like to assure you that while we wish we didn't have to make these difficult decisions, we realize that sacrifices must be made to safeguard our community. These changes in how we learn, work, and live come with difficulties and inconveniences. However, adhering to social distancing and stay-at-home policies are our primary responsibility and demonstrate how we care for our communities, for our "Dear Neighbors," locally, nationally, and globally.

### **Future Updates**

I will provide another campus update next week. In the meantime, please continue to check the College's website and to use available resources to aid with your studies and instruction.

I offer my most sincere gratitude for your patience and perseverance. I pray that you and your families will stay safe and continue to learn, teach, and support each other during these unprecedented times.

Thank you for your care, understanding, and flexibility.

Sincerely,



Sister Carol Jean Vale, SSJ, Ph.D.  
President