



FIVE TOWNS COLLEGE

SIXTH ADVISORY NOTICE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

April 23, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this email finds you and your families well. It has not been easy to adjust to the changes associated with New York Pause and the quarantine; but, it is something we must all do. Things have changed so much since March 13th and I know we all look forward to a return to normalcy.

It is important to be mindful that by working together as a nation and as a community, we have flattened the curve. While no words could ever adequately express the sorrow we all share over the loss of so many loved ones, we can hope for better times ahead and do everything we can to stay positive.

By working together, more than 90% of all Spring 2020 semester courses have successfully transitioned online. This is very important, because most students have been able to keep their educational goals on track. Nevertheless, the faculty recognizes that there have been significant individual challenges for many students, faculty, and staff members. Not just at Five Towns College, but at every college and university around the nation. However, I think we can all take comfort in knowing that we made the best of a very challenging situation.

I have received numerous questions about many things. While I will continue to respond to the individual emails you send, the most frequently asked questions are provided below, along with the answers as we know them to be right now.

Please read them all. When you are done, please email me if you still have questions. I will issue a follow-up FAQ shortly.

I extend my best wishes to each and every one of you, and look forward to welcoming you back to campus.

Sincerely,

David M. Cohen, J.D.
President

SECTION 1 – QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESUMPTION OF CLASSES

1. *Some of my classes have been placed on hiatus and are scheduled to resume on-ground on May 26th. Is this still happening?*

The most recent guidance issued by Governor Andrew Cuomo is that New York Pause will continue until May 15th. If that is not extended, the College plans to resume classes on May 26th as planned – subject to any additional restrictions the State may mandate.

2. *The College announced that classes would continue until July 17th. Is that still the plan?*

If classes resume on May 26th, the window when classes will be offered extends to July 17th. However, since only about 10% of classes need to resume, those students involved only need to finish one or two classes. Since there will be few scheduling conflicts, the faculty will have the discretion to accelerate those classes with additional meeting sessions in order to complete the semester more quickly. In fact, we expect that most classes will finish sooner. The actual completion schedule will be determined by each faculty member in consultation with their class of students.

3. *Is the College still planning to offer Intensive Workshops to provide students with hands-on learning opportunities?*

Yes, the College plans to offer Intensive workshops when classes resume. If classes are unable to resume, Intensive Hands-on Workshops will still be held as soon as circumstances permit.

4. *I am a Theatre Arts student. What will happen with Once Upon a Mattress and Wolves?*

A decision will be made by the Theatre Arts Division after the next guidance is issued by New York State

5. *What about the Luminary Awards?*

The Film/Video Division is still planning to hold the Luminary Awards. A new date has not been set.

SECTION 2 – QUESTIONS ABOUT RESIDENCE HALLS, HOUSING AND MEAL PLAN REFUNDS/CREDITS

6. *Will the residence halls reopen as well?*

If classes resume, the residence halls will reopen for resident students who need to finish a class or who want to participate in an Intensive Hands-on Workshop. This would change if New York Pause continues to restrict residential life.

7. *When will the room lottery be held for the Fall 2020 semester?*

The room lottery will be held beginning on Monday, May 3 and concluding on Friday, May 8. The room lottery is open to students who are registered for the Fall 2020 semester. The Lottery will be conducted by telephone and Zoom, based upon class standing (seniors first). Eligible students will be contacted by the RLO to schedule a time for room selection. Students who need to reside on-campus next year are urged to participate in the room lottery. With more New Yorkers staying in-state next year, current enrollment projections indicate that the residence halls may be at capacity for the Fall 2020 semester.

8. *What if I am a resident student who does not need to return because I have completed all of my classes online, will I receive a refund or a credit for housing and meal plan charges?*

The College will post two types of credits onto the accounts of all eligible resident students:

- **Housing Credit**

The first credit will be a pro-rata adjustment for housing charges incurred for the Spring 2020 semester. The amount of this adjustment varies by student, and takes into account whether they resided in a single or double, whether they are returning for the Spring semester extension (May 26th forward), and whether they received a grant from the College or another funding source to cover a portion of their housing charges.

- **Meal Plan Credit**

The second credit will represent the actual unused portion of each student's meal plan charge from the Spring 2020 semester and Spring 2020 extension if applicable.

9. *What if I am a resident student who is returning for the extension, will I receive a refund or credit as well for the Spring 2020 semester housing and meal plan charges?*

Students who will be returning for the extension will also receive a housing and meal plan credit for unused portions. Calculations for students who need to return will be made at the conclusion of the spring semester extension based on the length of occupancy and how much is left on their meal plan when they move-out.

10. *What if I am graduating or will not be returning next year, will I still receive a refund or a credit for the unused housing and meal plan charges from Spring 2020?*

Yes. When you are certified as a graduate or otherwise withdraw from the College, your account will be zeroed out and any credits on your account will be refunded to you.

11. *If I am receiving a credit for room and board charges, may I use them for tuition next year if I am planning to commute?*

The credits will be applied towards your student account. They may be used to pay any of the charges you incur for next year. If you are not going to be a resident student next year, they will be used to reduce your tuition charges instead. In this way, no student will lose any money from the Spring 2020 semester.

12. *I had an open balance with the College for the Spring 2020 semester, will I still receive a credit for the fall?*

The credit you receive will first be applied to your adjusted balance. If there is any credit left over, it will be applied to your Fall 2020 semester charges or refunded to you should you not return.

13. *If I do not need to return to the residence halls, when can I retrieve my belongings and move out?*

The Residence Life Office will allow students to begin checking out as soon as the New York Pause permits staff and students to do so. Because of social distancing requirements, students will need to schedule the date and time of their check-out - to avoid a large gathering at the gate.

14. How do I schedule my check-out date and time?

The Residence Life Office will coordinate check out. You may schedule this time during the room selection lottery or by contacting the RLO directly if you are not participating in the room lottery.

15. May I access my dorm room earlier?

Regretfully, no. Unless, you have left behind an essential item, such as a passport or medical device.

SECTION 3 – QUESTIONS ABOUT GENERAL TUITION AND FEE REFUNDS/CREDITS**16. Will the College offer a tuition reduction for the Spring 2020 since the classes were moved online?**

Regretfully no. The College's instructional budget is not reduced because of the transition to the online modality.

17. Will the College offer partial refunds for course fees paid for the Spring 2020?

Regretfully no. However, the College expects to offer additional grants to continuing students for the Fall 2020 semester, to off-set some of the fees paid for the Spring 2020 semester. The amount of each grant will vary by student depending upon the actual fees they incurred. These will be calculated after the College resumes on-ground operations and the Bursar's Office staff is able to resume their work fully.

SECTION 4 – QUESTIONS ABOUT ACADEMIC SUCCESS, GRADES, AND FALL 2020 REGISTRATION**18. I had a difficult time with online learning and will not be able to complete all of the courses I started. What options and accommodations are available to me?**

If you transitioned to an online course and do not complete it with a passing grade of C or higher these are your options:

- i. You may accept grades of D or higher along with the credit and be done;
- ii. You may withdraw from any class in which you receive a grade of less than C, up till one week after the final grade is posted, and repeat the class during a summer session without charge. If the course is not offered during the summer session, you may take an overload and repeat it during the Fall 2020 semester without additional charge – or you may include it in your regular course load during that term;
- iii. You may elect to receive a grade of Incomplete (I), and work to raise your grade over the summer. If you elect this option, you must make arrangements with the Chair of your academic Division up till one week after the final grade is posted. Please remember that grades of Incomplete must be converted to a letter grade by the fall semester or they will automatically become an "F". It is your responsibility to complete the course with a letter grade.

19. I will complete the online classes as scheduled with grades of C or higher. However, I still feel that I am missing something. What are my options?

- i. Each academic division will be offering Intensive Hands-on Workshops. These are currently scheduled to begin May 26th. If they do not begin then, they will begin as soon as is practical. They may also be offered in the fall. You may voluntarily choose to participate in these workshops to improve your subject matter knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- ii. Even if you successfully completed a class with a grade of C or higher, you may retake the same course anytime next year on a space available/audit basis without charge for tuition when the course is part of your degree program or major area of concentration. Course fees still apply.

20. I do not think I will make Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) this semester, in accordance with the standards published in the College Catalog, or I am on an academic/financial aid waiver and I do not think I will make SAP this semester. What now?

SAP standards related to the number of credits you must complete for the Spring 2020 semester are waived. (You must still have a satisfactory GPA in accordance with published standards.) You must, however, make SAP by the conclusion of the Fall 2020 semester.

If you are currently on a waiver and do not make SAP because you have not accumulated enough credits, you may be dismissed or lose your financial aid eligibility after the Fall 2020 semester. If you are not on a waiver and do not make SAP this term by not accumulating enough credits, you have until the end of the Fall 2020 term to make SAP. Otherwise, you will need to apply for and receive a waiver to continue after that time.

If you do not make SAP this semester due to your cumulative grade point average, or if you think you might not make SAP by the end of the Fall 2020 semester because you will not have enough credits by then, strongly consider catching-up with a summer class. Not sure where you stand? Contact the Financial Aid Office for guidance.

21. How do I register for the Fall 2020 semester if I have not done so already?

Registration for the Fall 2020 has already begun and nearly 60% of students are already re-registered. If you have not yet re-registered, contact your Online Mentor or Academic Advisor to schedule a registration appointment. Remember, regular registration ends on Friday, May 1. Late Registration begins on Monday, May 3.

Section 5 – Questions about Graduate Study

22. Do these same policies apply to graduate and doctoral students?

These policies are the same for Master's students. Doctoral students should seek guidance from their Division Chair.

23. I am graduating from the Music or Music Education Program. What options are available for me to continue my studies?

The College will renew the Graduate Studies Incentive Grant for music and music education program graduates who seek to continue their studies next year at the graduate level. If accepted to either program, a graduate studies incentive grant may be available for those students who continue full-time next year. Please contact the Admissions Office or the Music Division Chair for additional guidance: jill.miller@ftc.edu.

SECTION 6 – QUESTIONS ABOUT SUMMER SCHOOL

24. Will there be a summer session and are there any special arrangements being made for summer study?

The College will offer two summer sessions. Session I will be offered online only for six weeks from June 1 – July 10. Session II will on-ground and hybrid for four weeks from July 20 to August 14. Please note that Session I will overlap with the Spring 2020 extension. The overlap will not impact summer study, as on-ground courses coming off hiatus for the spring extension will be held in the morning while synchronous chat sessions for online summer classes will be held in the afternoon and evening to avoid schedule conflicts.

25. How do I register for a summer class?

The summer class schedule will be posted after May 1. You may register for a summer course by contacting your Academic Advisor or the Registrar's Office directly: eric.farahani@ftc.edu

26. Will there be any financial aid to attend summer school at Five Towns College?

Yes. In addition to the regular offering of financial aid programs, tuition for summer school will be half of the regular per-credit charge. If you are attending summer school to retake a class for which you received a grade of less than C or from which you elected to withdraw (see, Question 18, above), you will receive a grant to cover the entire cost of tuition in that summer class.

27. May I use a housing or meal plan credit to pay for summer classes?

Yes.

28. Is summer study recommended and why?

Summer study is strongly recommended. These are unusual times. Getting ahead by completing 3 or more credits online or on-ground over the summer may help you to stay on track for graduation should you need to take it slower in the future – such as to help care for a family member or friend. Credits earned through summer study also help with SAP if you are behind in the number of credits you must accumulate.

The lower tuition and generous institutional scholarships that are available for summer study make this possible. Not sure if you can afford summer study? Check with the Financial Aid Office to learn more.

SECTION 7 – QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION RELIEF FUND**29. I have heard about the Higher Education Relief Fund, what is that and am I eligible?**

The Higher Education Relief Fund is part of the CARES Act, and provides financial assistance to students impacted by the National Emergency. Many Five Towns College students should be eligible to participate in a fund of approximately \$430,000 which will be administered by the Financial Aid Office over the next 12 months. The College has not yet received funding and is still awaiting guidance from the U.S. Department of Education about how to allocate CARES Act funds. You must, however, be eligible to participate in a Title IV Student Financial Aid program in order to be considered (Pell, SEOG, FCWS, and Direct Student Loan Program).

SECTION 8 – GENERAL QUESTIONS**30. I participate in the College's Tuition Lock-Guarantee. Will that continue?**

Yes. The College will renew the Tuition Lock-Guarantee for all students who are registered for the Fall 2020 semester by May 1st. Other requirements for the Tuition Lock-Guarantee, such as GPA, 30 credits minimum per year, and Community Service are waived for this semester.

31. I miss Five Towns College, what is new there?

We miss you too, and have used this time to complete a few important initiatives. In addition to dealing with all of the challenges associated with the National Emergency we have:

- Renovated the Mac Lab, Room 319;
- Refurbished the Office of Admissions;
- Designed a new program in Audio Recording Technology leading to the Master of Professional Studies (M.P.S.) degree, and will soon file this application with the State Education Department; and
- Reorganized the College to include a new Online Education Division to support students who choose to continue studying online in whole or in part.

32. I am a graduating senior. Will there be a graduation ceremony.

Yes. Commencement is postponed and will not be cancelled. A new date has not been announced.

33. With all that is happening, what can I expect might be different at Five Towns College for the Fall 2020 semester?

The College is working to keep the best parts of this transition in place, while also striving to adhere to important social distancing protocols. Here are some of the changes that you can expect:

- Class size will be reduced across the board for the Fall 2020 semester. While the average class size at Five Towns is already 13, this will now be the maximum class size (production and ensemble classes excepted) in order to ensure that students can maintain a comfortable distance while taking on-ground classes. Online classes will be capped at 20.
- While most classes will still be offered on-ground, multiple sections of the same course may be offered online for those students who prefer to learn from a distance or just want the added convenience. Online courses will typically be those that are “lecture style.” Hands-on courses, such as those offered by the Audio, Film/Video, Mass Communication, Theatre Arts, and ICG Divisions will continue to be on-ground or hybrid (part online/part on-ground).
- Rehearsals for larger music ensembles will be held in the Sound Gymnasium, to allow student musicians to maintain a comfortable distance.
- Theatrical productions will incorporate the same training and development for students as always; but, the productions for the fall will be smaller in scale. Larger productions should return for the spring and summer 2021.

34. What will be the same for the Fall 2020 semester?

The most distinguishing characteristic of Five Towns College will be the same: the way we care about each other and the way we come together as a community of artists and scholars.

In these challenging times, the College’s small size will continue to allow the faculty and staff to personalize their instruction to meet the needs of each student. The one-on-one mentoring that takes place, through the wide-range of support services, networking, and community engagement will assure that every student will be well-served and continue moving forward towards graduation.