

HERITAGE UNIVERSITY

Partial Re-Opening Plan Phases 1 and 2 of Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus pandemic has become a worldwide event that is leaving (and will continue to leave) major scars in all our societies. Different countries, and different institutions, have taken varied measures to mitigate the spread of the virus. At Heritage University, we decided to close the University and work remotely on March 23, 2020. This decision came as a result of our interpretation of state and Yakima Health District mandates. Even though this has been a successful transition, it has not been without its issues. Our curriculum and institutional culture have not been designed for remote learning. Many of our students have faced difficulties studying from home.

Since Heritage University moved to remote learning, there have been developments in the State of Washington that lead us to present this plan for partial re-opening. The significant developments are that the governor issued a proclamation permitting colleges and universities to develop re-opening strategies regardless of the phase being observed by the county in which the institution is located. The other development is that Yakima County is beginning to show progress as signified by its classification of phase 1.5.

A partial re-opening of our campus for students is a desirable condition. The majority of students that choose Heritage University to fulfill their higher education do so because they are looking for a quality on-campus educational experience. They believe in the value that participating in a campus environment brings. The camaraderie and sense of belonging to an institution of higher education are accomplished by being present, interacting with faculty, staff, and other students.

Additionally, there is another set of circumstances for Heritage students that require a campus presence. Our mission is to serve students who face difficulties accessing higher education. The great majority come from low-income environments and do not have the conditions in their homes to conduct significant academic work. Internet connectivity is unreliable and space is limited. For them, access to higher education means coming to campus.

At the same time, we must recognize that the health crisis is far from over. Yakima County has one of the highest infection rates in the state and the nation. Thus, while it is desirable to open our campus for instruction because of the needs of our students, it is imperative that we do so following the strictest safety protocols to access our campus. We do not want to be in an environment where we expose anyone to the virus.

It is with these thoughts that we present the following plan for work at Heritage University during the Fall of 2020 while Yakima and Benton counties are in Phase 1 or 2. These guidelines apply to Toppenish and the CBC campus locations.

1) Campus Safety Protocols

- a) The Safe Open committee has developed well-established guidelines and processes for employees to access campus based on CDC recommendations. Anyone entering campus will be required to request access, be screened at various entry points, and must comply with the requirement of wearing a mask at all times, indoors and out, as well as practice social distancing.
- b) Facilities staff have redirected their efforts to cleaning, disinfecting and managing the access procedures.
- c) In the future, we will expand and enhance these guidelines to allow students who need computers and internet connectivity to participate in their course work and access services such as tutoring and library services.

2) Instruction

a) Instructional Delivery

- i) At both the Toppenish and Tri-cities campuses, many courses will be offered as hybrid modalities, providing some-face-to face instruction and activities, at safe social distancing, synchronous lectures/labs online, and asynchronous lectures and labs provided online.
- ii) All courses will be offered at the time and days currently scheduled. This applies to both face-to-face instruction and synchronous lectures/labs online. The only exceptions are those courses originally scheduled as online asynchronous courses prior to the Covid-19.
- iii) All courses will be available in an asynchronous format as well as synchronously, which students will access via MyHeritage. *Faculty may record face-to-face or synchronous zoom lectures or prepare separate Panapto lectures and upload them to MyHeritage.* The level of hybridity, to be proposed by the instructor, will depend on the course, the students' needs, and the new adjusted classroom capacity that allows for safe social distancing.

b) Classroom Use

- i) Through a scheduling document that will be released soon, instructors will provide their ability to deliver face-to-face instruction based on their feelings to do so safely, given their personal health assessment. Instruction that will take place face-to-face with class loads exceeding maximum classroom occupancy will be broken-up in one of two ways:
 - (1) Classes can be divided into subsections that are at or below the maximum occupancy level for a given classroom, e.g., a,b,c, etc. Group a will meet face-to-face on day one. Other subsections will receive instruction remotely, synchronously or asynchronously, either from campus -- not in the classroom but from a location where they have access to a reliable internet connection and a computer, safely at distance, or from home. Group b would then meet face-to-face on their designated day, and the other subsections would receive instruction as illustrated above.
 - (2) In some cases, classes will be able to be divided as above and simultaneously meet in a series of classrooms—group a in classroom space one, group b in classroom space two, and so on. Instructors will need to complete a long-form in this scenario to secure the additional meeting rooms.

- ii) Faculty will post online office hours, via open zoom sessions, and be available for students as if they were on campus.
 - c) **Other academic activities**
 - i) McNair, Mellon-Mays, Leadership Alliance, and Enactus
 - (1) All activities should be conducted remotely. Exceptions will be determined through discussion with the instructor's department chair.
 - d) **Student Options**
 - i) Students will be able to self-select, based on health-related concerns for themselves and those they live with, as well as their potential exposure to Covid-19 and their fear of transmitting the disease, their desire/ability to come to campus to attend face-to-face lectures, as described above, and/or to access computers and an internet connection to receive their instruction synchronously or asynchronously.
- 3) Student Support Activities**
- a) The majority of services will be offered online, synchronous and asynchronously. We will provide online chat, open office hours, and other modalities that make it easy for students to access our services. In addition, we will have some services that will be offered on-campus on a limited basis.
 - b) Tutoring – During the transition last semester, the ASC team worked very hard to transition their services online. Also, we may create spaces so students can access the ASC face-to-face by setting up plexiglas dividers between the tutor and student.
 - c) NSO – Staff members are attending the CILT training and plan to create a course using the same template as provided by the CILT team. NSO will use several modalities to promote equity and access options to meet the needs of our students. A combination synchronous, asynchronous, videos, forums, open office hours, and on-campus access are all integrated into the course.
 - d) CAMP, TRIO, HEP, Advising and ADA – All organizations have been operating in an online capacity since our transition on March 23. The staff in student affairs is also participating in the CILT training and plan to have a combination of activities such as mentoring, electives, and open office hours for access.
- 4) Staff and faculty (when not teaching)**
- a) Staff and faculty (when not teaching) will be encouraged to continue working remotely.
 - b) All faculty related meetings will be via zoom.
 - c) Some staff and work-study students might be assigned to assist on-campus screening/cleaning as their regular tasks might not be necessary during this phase.
- 5) Exceptions**
- a) There could be exceptions to these guidelines. These need to be presented to an area VP who will present the request to other VPs for approval.

The COVID-19 crisis affects every person on the planet in some way or another. And the lived experience ranges across the whole spectrum of emotion. Now more than ever, we need to take into consideration our humanness and embrace the ambiguity.

Above all else, we must continue to lead with our mission, always acting in the best interest of our students across all aspects of their beings—their health and safety, their determination to continue to move forward with their lives and education, and their need for guidance and reassurance.

While we are all weary, this is not going to last forever. But while it does, we must remember that each day will bring new challenges to overcome; some detail will arise that we did not foresee. Fluidity, patience, and respect for one another are called for from all of us. Learn to embrace ambiguity, think boldly, and try new ways of doing things, breaking the strictures of doing things in specific ways just because that is how they have always been done. Fail forward! Do not be afraid to fail. Be afraid only of not learning from those failures. We will learn new and better ways to do things on the other side of this crisis. Practice empathy--think first in what shoes those around you are walking when making your decisions and in your reactions. Be optimistic. We can do this! We can make it through this. We can not only survive this but still thrive in this. And lastly, keep trying. Pick them up and put them down one step at a time every day, and we will make it. Together.

Eagles Strong
Eagles Safe
Eagles Kind.