

Knights Return Plan

Updated for the Spring Semester 2021

Please note: All these plans remain fluid as circumstances continue to change around us, as better rapid testing is developed, and as we wait for the approval and distribution of vaccines. Changes in government mandates may also impact these plans.

The Underlying Assumptions of the Plan

We make this plan ***as trusting children of God***, whose whole lives and eternity securely rest in God because of his giving and forgiving love to us in Jesus, his eternal Son and our brother. This truth guards us from planning in fear as if the virus, not our gracious God, were in control!

We make this plan ***as faithful and responsible stewards*** whom God has called to manage all his gifts wisely, including his gift of health. This truth guards us from planning in ways that would tempt God by demanding that he protect us in specific ways he has not promised!

We make this plan ***with the wisdom and insight gained during the first semester***, especially regarding weak spots such as these:

- Travel off campus often led to positive tests;
- Close contact in the cafeteria created the need for many to quarantine; and
- Inconsistent practice of daily self-monitoring for symptoms and masking/social distancing led to virus spread.

The Purpose of the Plan

If we who are part of the MLC campus family were nothing but Spirit-created new selves, without any hint of our sinful natures, we would simply say, “Love your neighbor as yourself!”, and we would know precisely what to do in every detail in the midst of this pandemic. We’d love our neighbors without fail in selfless, Christ-like love.

Until heaven, however, we remain at the same time both saint and sinner. As we grow to maturity in Christ, each day we die to a sinful self-focus and rise to live in the gospel’s power to a love that looks beyond ourselves. This plan helps us put into concrete expression what it can look like to live unselfishly in the midst of a pandemic, thoughtful of the 900 members of our campus family and our 13,000 neighbors in New Ulm.

All this becomes even more important as we consider the mission of our college. We partner on this hill to train a new generation of gospel heralds. While digital technology is a gift of God, ministry training is enhanced when we can live and work together on this hill.

The Details of the Plan

As students, faculty, and staff, we are committed to carrying out the mission of MLC safely and together on campus from January 25 through May 16 (Commencement and Call Day). Rescued by and imitating the selfless love of Christ for us, **† I WILL 4 U †** continues to be our motto. We make this plan knowing that God will choose how he will bless these efforts.

Before Returning to Campus

To begin our on-campus time together with as few active COVID cases as possible, we ask students to follow two protocols before returning to campus:

1. Self-quarantine at home for 10 days

During those 10 days, we ask you to follow well-established protocols:

- Avoid unnecessary travel outside of your home;
- Limit social gatherings to the members of your household;
- Adhere to social distancing and mask wearing;
- Refrain from work that puts you in close contact with others outside your household; and
- Use Campus Clear to monitor symptoms that could indicate COVID-19.

Apply the following timeline to your particular situation:

- **ECLC student teachers** arrive on campus by January 2-3 (teaching begins January 4). They begin self-quarantine December 26.
- **Staff ministry interns** report to their experiences January 6. They begin self-quarantine December 28.
- **Elementary student teachers** begin orientation January 11. They begin self-quarantine January 1.
- **Secondary student teachers** have online class January 4-15 and on-campus orientation January 16. They begin self-quarantine January 6.
- **Men's and women's basketball teams** arrive on campus January 17. They begin self-quarantine January 7.
- **All other students** begin on-campus classes January 25. They begin self-quarantine January 15.

2. Get tested for COVID-19

The second step to help ensure as few active COVID cases as possible is to test prior to arrival on campus. We are thankful that many low- or no-cost testing options are available. Students should get tested for COVID-19 **so that they receive the result of their test within the 72-hour window before they arrive in New Ulm.**

Please recognize that this takes some advanced planning:

1. Find out where you can receive a test in your home area;
2. Ask how long it will take for results to come back; and
3. Schedule the test so that you receive results within 72 hours before arrival on campus.

All students who receive a negative COVID test will forward dated proof of that negative test to their dorm supervisor. Only those who have a documented negative test may move into their dorm.

Those testing positive for COVID-19 should, likewise, forward dated proof of their positive test to their dorm supervisor and will need to remain at home until their isolation period ends.

Those who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 (within the last three months) DO NOT need to be tested again before arrival on campus. Please send proof of your positive test to your dorm supervisor.

After Arriving on Campus

All seven of the elements listed below build on what we learned from the first semester. Each is designed to protect our ability to enjoy life and learning together on campus.

1. Remain on campus for the first 10 days

Students are asked to remain on campus for 10 days after arriving on campus. This does not include student teachers who need to travel to their school. We ask that students with jobs in the community work with their employers to limit their schedules during this period.

2. Refrain from non-essential travel all semester

Other than Easter break, students are asked to refrain from non-essential off-campus trips to family or social events. If such travel proves unavoidable (e.g., family funeral or emergency), students will register their travel plans with their dorm supervisor ahead of their departure from campus. Those who choose to leave campus will be asked to quarantine for 10 days upon their return. Five days into quarantine, students can leave quarantine if they receive a negative COVID test.

Except for travel essential to campus operations, faculty and staff are likewise encouraged to refrain from non-essential personal travel during the semester. If such travel becomes necessary, faculty and staff are urged to follow the same self-quarantine and testing pattern outlined above.

3. Give evidence of Campus Clear use

In order to enable more consistent daily monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms, we will modify a successful strategy followed by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. All students will show their “all clear” screen to their professors at the start of periods 1-3 each day. Faculty members can alert our dorm staff if anyone routinely ignores this encouragement.

Professors will also show their “all clear” screen to their students. MLC workers may be asked to show their “all clear” screen to their supervisors.

Please remember to enable the automatic reminders in the Campus Clear app.

4. Maintain social distance and limit time in the cafeteria

Current Minnesota mandates significantly impact how our cafeteria can operate. Capacity is now 125 people instead of 250. Also, only two people may eat at a 6-foot table, and only one person may eat at a 4-foot or circular table.

Since it is unclear at this time whether these mandates will be extended or modified, it is impossible to predict every detail, but here is what we currently anticipate:

- **Breakfast:** Seating capacity does not present a great challenge at breakfast. Fewer students eat breakfast, and they typically spend less time in the cafeteria. Breakfast seating will be on a “first come, first seated” basis up to our current capacity of 125.
- **Lunch:** Last semester each student had a scheduled lunch period. Because of reduced capacity, we anticipate that each lunch period (4th, 5th and 6th periods) will be cut in half, providing 25 minutes to eat lunch. Student Life and IT will work to incorporate lunch times into student schedules. Cafeteria workers will need to carefully monitor capacity.
- **Supper:** As we did last semester, we will again use Sign-up Genius for supper and weekend meals. Reduced capacity will make it important for students to limit time in the cafeteria. For the sake of many athletes scheduled to participate in sports this semester, we will move evening chapel to a later time so that supper times can be expanded. Here are the anticipated supper and weekend meal schedules:
 - **Weekday Supper** will be served in half-hour periods, 5:00-7:30 pm, with the last two periods designated for athletic teams.
 - **Weekend Brunch** will be served in half-hour periods, 10:30 am-1:00 pm.
 - **Weekend Supper** will be served in half-hour periods, 5:00-7:30 pm.
- **Late Night:** Current government mandates require Late Night to end at 10 pm. We anticipate Late Night to operate on a “first come, first seated” basis 8:00-10:00 pm.

New: Ecologically sensitive grab ‘n’ go containers

Many students expressed concern with the amount of garbage created by styrofoam containers used for grab ‘n’ go meals last semester. To reduce that waste, we will replace styrofoam containers with reusable plastic containers. If you utilize the grab ‘n’ go option, please **do not** throw the plastic containers away. Since each container costs the college \$5, it is essential that

containers be returned to the cafeteria daily to be cleaned and sanitized. We are still working out how to streamline this process.

5. Observe masking and social distancing protocols

In accord with the current Minnesota mandate, students are to observe masking and social distancing everywhere **indoors** other than when alone (or with a roommate) in a dorm room or work station. They are also to mask **outdoors** if social distancing is not possible.

Since the length of immunity after infection has not been conclusively established, and since we want to avoid confusion concerning protocols, everyone will observe masking and social distancing protocols, including those who have previously tested positive for COVID-19.

In order to help us remain careful in observing protocols, dormitory supervisors will warn and then fine those who persist in ignoring masking or social distance protocols. If a student continues ignoring protocols even after being warned and then fined, that student will be required to take a two-week leave of absence from campus. No credit for room and board will be given.

6. Be prepared if asked to isolate or quarantine

While we have more than doubled our quarantine space this semester, we will still ask students to return home, if at all possible, if they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. Preserving on-campus quarantine space is a critical element in remaining on campus together. There is no credit for room and board during such temporary absences from campus.

For those who cannot return home (due to safety concerns, extreme distance, cost, or family medical concerns), their quarantine will take place on campus.

For those on campus who test positive, efforts will be made to arrange for isolation at home, and if that is not possible, isolation will be provided on campus.

7. Honor sport-specific protocols

Athletes will follow sport-specific protocols in keeping with NCAA recommendations and UMAC Conference guidelines. Since the NCAA's recommendations have changed quite regularly, we will wait to announce guidelines until shortly before each sport begins practice.