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UC Hastings Law

SAN FRANCISCO

July 1, 2020

Dear UC Hastings Community,

I hope this message finds you well. As I am sure you are aware, the trajectory of the pandemic is of increasing concern, statewide and nationally. And I know that you, like many across the globe, are feeling the impacts in your personal and professional lives. In light of this, I write to share important news about the coming fall semester.

In order to protect the health and safety of all community members and to allow students, staff, and faculty to plan in the face of uncertainty, I have made two decisions:

1. We will move all classes online in the Fall 2020 ("F20") term; and
2. We will have an on-campus presence this fall, with socially-distanced in-person engagements including community events, social activities, faculty office hours, and study opportunities, as soon as San Francisco Department of Public Health ("Public Health") guidelines permit.

Fall 2020 Online Classes

In May, I asked Academic Dean Morris Ratner to work with faculty to create a hybrid curriculum for our incoming 1L students and to schedule a mix of online, in-person, and hybrid options for upper-division, MSL, and LLM students. Our faculty and staff have committed an enormous amount of time and energy since the start of the pandemic to creating hybrid instructional models, and we stand ready to pivot to that modality when we can. My decision not to do so for F20 did not hinge on our readiness or capability to offer hybrid options. Rather, we simply do not have enough information at this time to be confident that we can provide a safe in-person or hybrid course experience when classes resume in August. Furthermore, I believe it is likely that Public Health guidance will require us to be online for all or part of the semester. By making our decision now, before course registration starts, students, staff, and faculty will be better able to plan for the fall. Under this model, all classes will be equally available to students regardless of their ability to come to campus.

The decision to move all F20 classes online is final, meaning that you need not worry about a mid-semester shift back to in-person classes. However, we aim to start using our new, state-of-the-art classrooms for in-person or hybrid instruction as early as the Spring 2021 ("SP21") term, when more is known about how the virus is affecting the health of higher education communities.

On-Campus Activities

Although courses will be fully online in F20 to avoid the highest risk factor of COVID-19 transmission in the classroom setting and to reduce population density in our buildings, please know that there will be life on campus as soon as possible this fall. We are prepared to offer a variety of in-person

events and community engagement opportunities for students to meet with each other and with faculty and staff via faculty office hours, faculty-led discussion groups, student organization meetings, student study groups, and community-building activities—all subject to social-distancing protocols and other Public Health guidelines.

As soon as Public Health guidance allows, our new Cotchett Law Center building, including its outdoor spaces – the Quad and fifth-floor rooftop deck with spectacular views of City Hall – will be open for gatherings with appropriate social distancing, including meetings with professors and fellow students. Other spaces on campus will be open to the extent that Public Health and safety precautions permit. Such facilities include the basketball court, exercise and weight rooms, library, and other study spaces.

UC Hastings staff will be onsite to address in-person needs as well as to ensure proper functioning of all spaces for on-campus activities. All student-facing departments, including Student Services, LEOP, the Disability Resources Program, the Office for Academic Skills Instruction and Support, the Records Office, Admissions, Financial Aid, the Law Library, and the Career Development Office, will be open. Initially, we anticipate that much of their business will be conducted virtually. However, as soon as circumstances allow, in-person staffing will ramp-up as the campus returns to more-normal operations. Again, these plans are contingent on Public Health guidelines.

Although this plan provides a level of certainty regarding F20 instruction that our prior, mixed-instruction model did not, I realize that the changes I am announcing will be welcome news to some and disappointing to others. I spoke at length with the senior leadership team, and we wrestled with the issues and conflicting interests inherent in this situation. Our decision affirms prioritizing the health and safety of our students and other community members.

Registration & Grading

Dean Ratner and the Records Office will follow up with additional information about instruction, registration, grading, and exams. For now, please note the College has reverted to typical grading scales and normalization requirements (curves). As Dean Ratner will explain, F20 exams will all be take-home, though we may adopt remote-proctoring software that supports closed-book exams for some classes, including bar classes.

The Tower

The Tower will be open. But given that all F20 classes will be conducted online, we are allowing students who have signed leases but no longer want them to cancel without penalty. Note, however, that we hope to have in-person activities and events in the fall and resume on-campus instruction for the spring 2021 semester, and the only way to guarantee a unit for the spring is through a lease in the fall as we cannot hold units open due to demand and budget constraints. Also, it is not too late to get on the waitlist for an apartment in the Tower if you do want to be on campus this fall. Please watch for an email from Director of Auxiliary Enterprises Jarda Brych, which will describe the process for canceling existing leases or acquiring new ones.

Tuition

We will not reduce tuition, despite the switch to all-remote courses this fall. The cost of providing an outstanding legal education for our students is essentially the same, whether it is delivered in person or online.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, our faculty and staff will provide students with an innovative and engaging educational experience—one that builds community and fully prepares students for a successful professional career.

I want to thank you for your patience and wish you well as you plan for the year ahead. I look forward to seeing many of you on campus in the fall, even if classes are remote. I remain hopeful that the spring will bring solid ground on which to build more in-person instructional choices. Dean Ratner, Human Resources Director Andrew Scott, and Executive Director of Operations Rhiannon Bailard will follow up with messages specific to faculty and staff. Dean Ratner and Assistant Dean of Students Grace Hum will also follow up with students as necessary. And if you have questions for me, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best regards,

David

David L. Faigman
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