

News

The college releases further details on policy changes and safety protocols for 2020-21

Bree Gray, News Editor | June 1, 2020



In an email sent to the campus community at 12:07 p.m. on Thursday, May 28, President Hilary Link indicated that the college will spend the summer finalizing the Return to Campus plan. During the panel discussion via Zoom, on Tuesday, May 26, college officials discussed the academic calendar and new health policies for the 2020-21 academic year, which included the previously unnamed RCP. The panel included Link, Provost and Dean of the College Ron Cole, Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students April Thompson, Dean of Curriculum and Registrar Ian Binnington, Dean of Institutional Diversity Kristin Dukes and Director of Athletics and Recreation Bill Ross. During the panel discussion, Link noted that these individuals were integral to establishing new protocol and policies for the college.

During the panel discussion, the panelists announced the formation of twelve operational groups and the establishment of an internal public health agency for the upcoming academic year.

In the email sent on May 28, Link provided further detail about the operational groups mentioned during the panel. She has appointed ten leads for the twelve operational groups, which will function together and dictate any policy change to ensure that the college can reopen in the fall. The groups are comprised of college administrators including Cole, Thompson, Dukes, Ross, Senior Vice President for Enrollment and Dean of Admissions Cornell LeSane, Chief Financial Officer Linda Wetsell, Vice President for College Relations

Susan Salton, Vice President for Information Services & Assessment Rick Holmgren, Associate Vice President for Development and Alumni Affairs Phil Foxman and Director of Human Resources Jen Mangus.

Cole leads the operational group focused on academics and will make recommendations regarding academic decisions. Thompson will lead two operational groups focused on health and safety equipment needs for the campus as well as student life and residence life. Dukes heads the operational group for diversity, equity, inclusion, and access for all students. Ross leads the operational group that handles Allegheny athletics. LeSane will lead the operational group that handles admission procedures. Any monetary planning will come from Wetsell, who leads the budget planning and campus facilities operational groups. Salton leads the operational group that controls campus communication strategy. The operational group dedicated to technology and safety projects is led by Holmgren. Foxman leads the operational group, which surveys the potential for any on-campus events. Finally, decisions regarding employees and staffing will be the result of deliberations from Mungus' operational group. These individuals are accompanied by several other committee members from students, faculty and administration, as well as alumni.

"As committed as we are to resume on-campus living and learning, and as confident as we are that we have a number of unique factors that allow us to do so safely, our return to campus must factor in realistic contingencies for the college to be nimble and responsive to ever-changing global health circumstances," Link commented in a statement to Erie News Now. "Reopening our campus will also come with constraints such as a campus-wide commitment to continued mitigation strategies and following a cautious, strategic and carefully monitored plan of action as determined by our newly formed Allegheny College Health Agency."

In addition to the new operational groups, the college has established an internal health agency, officially known as the Allegheny College Health Agency. This is a public health agency co-directed by Professor Becky Dawson and Dr. Gabrielle Morrow, both of whom have extensive professional expertise in public health. Link indicated that the ACHA will send out health policies and protocols in the coming days. The agency will oversee mandatory testing on the campus community, contact tracing, and mitigation strategies for the college.

According to Link, effective July 1, the college will implement the Return to Work plan, guided by the ACHA. The RWP dictates how faculty, staff, and administrators will return to campus after an extended period of remote work, while maintaining safety protocols.

"As the world grows in complexity, it needs the creative problem-solvers that Allegheny prepares — multidimensional thinkers who consider different viewpoints, integrate knowledge across disciplines, and collaborate across vastly different backgrounds and perspectives. These are the exact skills needed to solve the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic — which cuts across perspectives and expertise in community and societal health, equity and social justice, economics, and more — and are the same skills we have adopted to develop our Return to Campus plan," Link wrote.

The college has been guided by several principles from the start of the pandemic in mid-April. These principles have shaped communication with the campus community and have dictated policy change for the new academic year. The college is dedicated to prioritizing the health and safety of the campus community and the greater Meadville area while maintaining transparent engagements and an equitable environment for all parties involved. Link emphasized the importance of maintaining local partnerships and Allegheny's reputable community ethos by making new policy changes mandatory for the entire campus community.

"All members of our community will be asked to participate in mitigation and containment strategies — testing, isolation, tracing, behavioral and travel modifications — that prioritize the health and well-being of themselves and the entire community," Link wrote.

According to the Meadville Tribune, Link is developing a plan to handle any member of the campus community who is not comfortable returning to campus, despite new safety policies. Link indicated in an interview with the Tribune that the campus is working to equip every classroom to enable remote attendance by students and professors for a portion of the academic calendar or its entirety.

The community has been instructed to wear masks and take all necessary safety precautions while in contact with other individuals. The college has asked the community to obey social distancing guidelines and avoid large social gatherings, including on-campus events and parties. To aid in this process, dividers are also being installed on campus.

Despite months of discontentment from the campus community with the administration, Link mentioned that she has great hope for the future and continues to be inspired by community connection.

"The ongoing connection our community has sustained during these past few months continues to inspire me and provides great hope for our future. Allegheny College will continue to deliver on its mission to provide a distinctive academic experience to all our students," Link wrote in the May 28 email. "I appreciate your continued patience and supportive understanding as we work to provide a safe and productive fall semester for our community."

2020-21 April Thompson COVID-19 Hilary Link return to campus ron cole

About the Writer

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News

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In an email to the campus community on Wednesday, June 3, Dean of Curriculum and Registrar Ian Binnington announced that the college faculty has appro...

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The decision by Allegheny College to pack student belongings remaining on campus, following the switch to remote instruction in mid-March, has caused ...

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UPDATE May 31 10:00 a.m.: In an email sent to the campus community on Tuesday, May 26, Dean of Students April Thompson announced that students may ret...

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The Campus

The student news site of Allegheny College