



Office of the Chancellor

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Philip L. Dubois
Chancellor

Message from Chancellor Dubois

May 4, 2020

Dear Niner Nation,

As you may have seen last week, UNC System Interim President Bill Roper **shared the intention** of all System institutions to return to on-campus instruction in the fall. UNC Charlotte has been engaged in extensive discussions to assess what is most appropriate for our University. I write today with an update on the fall semester and information on federal grant money to assist qualifying students as they prepare for a return to campus.

Plans for Fall Semester

We know how critical in-person instruction, hands-on learning, and activities with friends and peers are to a well-rounded student experience. As faculty and staff, we miss our interactions with students and each other, experiences that are important to maintaining the sense of community we feel deeply at UNC Charlotte. We also know we must be responsible about balancing the return to classrooms, offices, and residence halls with the health and safety of Niner Nation and the uncertainty this pandemic poses.

After consultation with public health and UNC System officials, **we have made the decision to begin our fall semester on Monday, September 7, two weeks after our previously scheduled start on August 24.** Given our unique location in North Carolina's largest city, these two weeks allow additional time between the projected peak of the virus in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County and the start of the academic year. We are seeing the flattening of the virus's curve as a result of social distancing, but county health authorities tell us the peak in the outbreak in Charlotte is now projected to occur in mid-June. As the city begins to return to life as a hub for global business and travel, we will assess any additional safety protocols that may be necessary on our campus. The health of our students and employees, especially those who may be at higher risk, is our top priority in making this decision.

We realize the delayed start will pose some logistical challenges, including the start on Labor Day. That is why we wanted to share this decision as soon as possible.

A complete schedule for a semester that begins instruction on September 7 is in preparation and will be released as soon as it is available. This will include specific dates that will guide move-in into campus residence halls, semester and holiday breaks, academic deadlines, and commencement plans.

We know you have many more questions about how life on campus will work when you return with social distancing protocols in place, how classes will be delivered, and other important topics. We are committed to getting you those answers as quickly as we can.

I asked for your patience and flexibility as we worked through the change to remote classes, and I ask for it again now. There is still much to be done to ensure we are welcoming you back to campus as safely as possible. As we move through that process, we will **post updates online** and send regular communication to keep you informed.

Our academic advisors and other support services remain open and available to assist you remotely to ensure you are registered for fall classes and progressing toward degree completion. Please visit the **Niner Nation Cares website** for more on these resources.

CARES Funding for Students

Funding from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides approximately \$12 million in grant money to UNC Charlotte for distribution to qualifying undergraduate and graduate students to help cover expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to the pandemic. A team of University leaders has developed a plan for how this money will be distributed to those students identified as having the highest need based on their most recent Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Grant amounts will vary by student and are unique to each student's circumstances. The specific criteria that will govern the allocation of funding will be released shortly. What is important for most students to know is that the funding is extremely limited. Although \$12 million is a lot of money, we also have a large number of students in need.

To be **eligible for CARES Act funds**, students must have been enrolled in spring 2020 and registered for fall 2020 classes, eligible to receive federal financial aid, and have filed a 2020-2021 FAFSA. Students who did not file a FAFSA will be given the opportunity to do so. The money will not be applied to any outstanding balances owed the University. We anticipate the grants will begin being distributed within 2-3 weeks. Recipients will see the amount of their grant posted to their student account before it is disbursed.

More information about the grants, including the form to complete if you haven't filed a FAFSA, will be posted on the **Niner Nation Cares website** soon. Students are encouraged to check the site for updates frequently.

Niners Helping Niners

Just like you, this is not the semester I imagined when we began in January, but I am proud of how this community has come together.

I am truly grateful for how Niner Nation has stood in support of one another. Through generous support of employees, alumni, friends, and students, we have raised \$500,000 in **emergency funds** and have helped more than 1,000 students to-date. This money helped pay rent, buy groceries, and reduce the strain of lost jobs and disrupted work and school schedules. Most importantly, it demonstrated the care Niners have for one another.

The past 12 months have challenged our University in unimaginable ways. At each turn, you have risen above every obstacle, showing the strength and resilience of Niner Nation.

I know you will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil".

Philip L. Dubois
Chancellor

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