



Dear Students,

I've been reading this week about the closings of various schools and universities, another terrible consequence of COVID-19. As sad as that news is, it has started me thinking about the things we can do to maximize safety at the school and why it's easier, because of our size and scale, to be more nimble than other institutions.

Here are a few factors: Our small population makes social distancing easier to facilitate. It also makes it easier to communicate rules and guidelines and ensure, at least on campus, that they are followed. Because of the nature of our teaching, we've always had an emphasis on small class sizes, an inherent advantage in the new environment. We also don't have dormitories, probably the single most dangerous space for contagion at most schools. And we don't offer food services or dining facilities which also reduces the likelihood of contagion spread.

As we plan for re-opening, here are some things we are considering:

- Installing plexiglass barriers at high-volume areas like the front desk and library
- Temporarily closing student lounges and gathering spaces
- Limiting access to computers in the library to ensure appropriate personal space
- Removing water fountains
- Increasing sanitizing schedules throughout the facility
- Keeping the school closed to the general public until conditions change

You may have other suggestions. Please let us know if you do. Your safety and well-being are the highest priorities for us.

Now for an update on timing and scheduling:

We've developed a series of contingency plans according to different start dates. The actual date will be continuously evaluated and confirmed a week prior to opening.

The four schedules shown below allow the school to accomplish the six weeks of studio time, final critiques and thesis exhibition for 2nd year MFA students. As well, all of these schedules accomplish the eight weeks of studio time for 1st year MFA students and both the class and studio time scheduled for the CFA students. These dates are still subject to change based on health and safety recommendations from federal and state government.

MFA Contingency Schedules by start date

May 18 (may be unlikely at this point, but we are still hoping for it)	
Final Thesis Critiques	June 30 – July 2
Class of 2020 Completion Date	July 2
Thesis Exhibition Opening	July 2
Class of 2020 Commencement Ceremony	TBD
Class of 2021 will move into their second-year studios July 6 and continue through fall.	
June 1	
Final Thesis Critiques	July 14 – July 16
Class of 2020 Completion Date	July 16
Thesis Exhibition opening	July 16
Class of 2020 Commencement Ceremony	TBD
Class of 2021 will move into their second-year studios July 20 and continue through fall	
June 15	
Final Thesis Critiques	July 28 - July 30
Class of 2020 Completion Date	July 20
Thesis Exhibition Opening	July 30
Class of 2020 Commencement Ceremony	TBD
Class of 2021 will move into their second-year studios August 3 and continue through fall	
June 29	
Final critiques	August 11 – August 13
Class of 2020 Completion Date	August 13
Thesis Exhibition Opening	August 13
Class of 2020 Commencement Ceremony	TBD
Class of 2021 will move into their second-year studios August 13 and continue through fall	

CFA Program Schedules by start dates

May 18 (may be difficult at this point, but we are still working toward it)	
Final Critiques	August 5
End of Semester	August 5
CFA Final Exhibition Opening	August 5
Commencement Ceremony	August 6
June 1	
Final Critiques	August 19
End of Semester	August 19
CFA Final Exhibition Opening	August 20
Commencement Ceremony	August 20
June 15	
Final Critiques	August 26
End of Semester	August 26
CFA Final Exhibition Opening	August 27
Commencement Ceremony	August 27
June 29	
Final Critiques	September 9
End of Semester	September 9
CFA Final Exhibition Opening	September 10
Commencement Ceremony	September 10

These dates keep the 2020/2021 academic year start date of August 31. We are preparing various contingencies for the 2020/2021 Academic year should the need arise based on federal and state recommendations.

In an effort to make sure we stay in close contact and aware of your concerns, Mike Smith, Katie Hemmer, Noelle Timmons and Peter Drake will be meeting with small groups of students for weekly check-ins.

In closing, I'd like to offer this quote from a post I saw on Instagram today. I don't know [@sahanabanana](#) but I thought she summed up the current situation and the appropriate response for us, as artists, beautifully.

“Amid conversations about changing of the way we distribute, experience, and engage with art, the resolution is always there under everything - to never stop making. To never stop being a witness both to the world and to the experience within.”

Have a productive weekend. Art calm and carry on.

Yours,

David

PS – Some good news: renowned writer and critic Eleanor Heartney will write this year's MFA Thesis Catalog essay!