

Simmons
UNIVERSITY

FALL 2020 PLAN

for Simmons Undergraduates



Dear Simmons Students, Parents, Faculty, and Staff

I want to thank our community for your patience as we have carefully considered plans for the Fall semester. Our guiding principle throughout this process has been the wellbeing of the Simmons community. We want to lead, and lead with care, when it comes to students, faculty, staff, and all those who interact with our community.

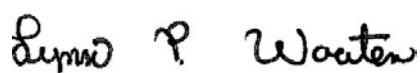
Our thoughtful process has led us to decide that **all of our teaching and activities will be online for the Fall 2020 semester, with very few exceptions**, and therefore very few students living on campus. This is the best way to ensure the continued health and safety of our community and to deliver on our mission—providing transformative learning that links passion with lifelong purpose. It also follows our deeply held value of ensuring equity and fairness in opportunity and experience.

Though we are confident this decision is the right one, it is still difficult because **our hearts are on campus**. Many of our undergraduates very much want to return to campus this Fall, and we are also disappointed that we cannot have any of our first-years through seniors on campus. The exceptions are a small category of students in clinical and field placements, practicums, and research projects; and a small category of students whose circumstances require particular consideration. **Students in these categories will be contacted directly**.

The Simmons University [COVID-19 Recovery Task Force](#), a diverse group of Simmons faculty and staff from across the University, analyzed a variety of Fall scenarios and explored a range of options over the last six weeks. In this booklet, I would like to outline our plans and the factors that influenced our decisions.

Though this semester will be different, the Simmons experience, and a Simmons degree, is defined by so much more than a few months away from campus. Historically, our community has shared a powerful sense of purpose, of leadership, and of caring for one another. I am confident that this will be a memorable and worthwhile time, one that will bring us closer until I can greet you on campus.

Sincerely,



Lynn Perry Wooten
President, Simmons University



Our Decision-Making Factors

First, we have carefully reviewed coronavirus health data and the guidance of medical and public health officials. Our own thinking has evolved in recent weeks as we have grown increasingly concerned by a resurgence of infection around the country. Nearly every state that has moved to significantly reopen has experienced an increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. This reality, combined with the likelihood of a second wave in late summer and into the Fall, raises serious concerns about our ability to deliver an on-campus educational experience without disruption.

The physical location of our University is also a factor. Simmons is located in the heart of Boston's Longwood Medical Area—a dense, highly populated urban center in close proximity to a number of hospitals. Our residence halls and overall location make social distancing difficult, especially compared to a larger residential campus or those in a more rural setting. In addition, a majority of our population relies on public transportation to get to campus—where it is nearly impossible to physically distance.

Our ability to deliver a high-quality, online undergraduate curriculum is also central to our thinking. We can confidently say that the Fall 2020 semester will be a [vibrant and engaging digital experience](#), unlike what many college students experienced across the country during the chaotic days of Spring 2020. Thanks to the hard work of our faculty and the help of our technology partner, 2U, we are able to develop a virtual campus that features hundreds of online courses, including small group discussions and project-based learning. The courses offer a high level of student-faculty interaction and are designed for high-impact educational practices and excellent learning outcomes. Furthermore, Simmons is a leader in online graduate education, and we have a track record of student satisfaction and success. This success will extend to our undergraduate programs, offering a highly interactive class experience that is flexible and meets student needs.

In addition, we will offer robust **digital undergraduate academic advising, student support, and career education, along with co-curricular activities** such as our new offering, TheLeadersProject@Simmons, a virtual holistic Simmons experience. We will have initiatives to support and welcome our incoming students. Just as important, current students can stay on track and continue their Simmons' experience uninterrupted, despite the uncertainty associated with the pandemic. For example, we have redesigned all of our PLAN courses for the online learning environment.

In other words, we are ensuring that the Simmons virtual campus experience brings our whole community together in a way that the restrictions and realities of COVID-19 would simply not allow us to do in person.

Listed on the following pages are some of the additional activities our students can look forward to, as well as support services that will be in place, and more information about international students, tuition and financial aid, athletics, and plans for Spring 2020.

Overview of Fall 2020

ACTIVITIES & SUPPORT FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

- Our Strategies for Success program will facilitate a successful transition to Simmons.
- After Orientation, all first-year students will be assigned a [first-year mentor](#).
- Students who join a theme community or Living-Learning community will have a Resident Advisor who will serve as a peer mentor to these communities and host regular programs.
- First-year students will be invited to participate in a series of events and activities related to this year's [community read](#), *What The Eyes Don't See*.
- "First Year Fridays" will offer social opportunities for first-year students to interact with one another.

ACTIVITIES & SUPPORT FOR ALL UNDERGRADUATES

- Our successful virtual Athletics program this past semester—virtual workouts, team meetings, competitions, and leadership development training—will be a model for other activities.
- [The Office of Organizational Culture, Inclusion, and Equity](#) and the Multicultural Center will offer workshops, student group meetings, and prominent speakers.
- Welcome Week, the Connections Carnival, and Shark Week events will be hosted virtually, along with programming from 55 clubs and organizations.
- The Office of Student Leadership and Activities will conduct leadership development through the Fall semester with the 8-week Pieces of Leadership Series, peer-to-peer leadership training, Student Leader Spotlight, and other virtual programming, such as House Party Trivia, and Music BINGO.
- Virtual events and dinners will be scheduled for affinity and special interest groups.
- Faculty and staff will host get-togethers for students interested in special topics such as astronomy, pre-law, and politics.
- Student Services offices (Health Center, Violence Prevention, Accessibility Services, Undergraduate Advising, Career Education, Writing Center, etc.) will be available through appointments and virtual office hours.
- Counseling Center services will continue to be offered through telehealth.
- Fun, themed social activities each week will occur, such as Motivation Mondays, Together Tuesdays, and Wellness Wednesdays.

A NOTE TO OUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

During this difficult time, we will continue to [advocate for access](#) to a Simmons education for all our students, and our Center for Global Education will be reaching out to this community. As an institution committed to excellence, we recognize and support the critical importance of international students to our full academic community.

TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID

We have carefully considered tuition and financial aid policies. There will be a freeze on undergraduate tuition rates, with [last year's rates](#) remaining for this upcoming year. In addition, we will reduce our student activity fees by just over 25%, to \$115. Student Activities Fees will be used to fund events and programs planned by our (over 55) student-led organizations, class councils, affinity organizations, and the Student Government Association. Activities Fees also help support community-wide student events such as our leadership series, Welcome Week programming, Shark Week activities, and performers and speakers for the Simmons community, which will be converted to a virtual format.

As we have always done, we will continue to award financial support in the form of considerable scholarships and financial aid packages for traditional undergraduate students. Also, we know students may have unanticipated personal expenses in these unusual times. We have set up the [Support Our Student Fund \(SOS Fund\)](#) to help students handle these unusual financial burdens. In addition, we are pleased to announce that Simmons will have a process in place to provide financial support for students who need help accessing essential technology and equipment, such as laptops and internet access.

ATHLETICS PROGRAM

We know our Sharks will be especially disappointed, but in keeping with our top priority of health and safety, we have decided to place all sports on hold until January 2021. We understand that the Great Northeast Athletic Conference is considering placing a hold until this time as well. As mentioned above, we believe that our athletes, who continue to be engaged virtually, have been a model for us all. And while that does not take the place of in-person activities, you have shown the rest of us how to remain focused on goals and on each other.

STUDY ABROAD

While the study abroad program is also canceled for the upcoming academic year, we are exploring alternatives that will allow students to continue global education and engagement.

SPRING SEMESTER

If we are able to do so safely—given the trajectory of the virus and public health protections at the time—we look forward to inviting students to campus this spring, although we do not know how many or how soon we will be able to do that.



Frequently Asked Questions and Resources



Contact Us

GENERAL QUESTIONS

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UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION

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FINANCIAL AID

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GRADUATE ADMISSION

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