

July 31, 2020

Dear Mercy Community,

Throughout Mercy's history organizing schools has been no small task. At various points in Mercy's educational ministry, educators were forced to pivot overnight as they endured tremendous obstacles when school attendance would double within weeks and when fires and floods destroyed school buildings. Despite every challenge that came our way, Mercy persevered and remained committed to providing a quality faith-based education with formative opportunities to develop leadership and character.

Today we find ourselves inspired by the example they set time and again in the face of adversity as we face our own generational challenge of how to provide a quality education in the midst of a global pandemic. Despite months of planning, we are forced to stop and reflect on what is best for our students, faculty, and staff, and their loved ones at home.

Despite our greatest desire to bring our Mercy students back to campus, we find ourselves in a position that requires us to adapt just as the Mercy educators did before us. Given recent news that San Mateo County has been placed on California's COVID-19 Watch List, **Mercy High School will begin the 2020-2021 school year in full Distance Learning.** Our Tri-School Leadership Team made the decision jointly to start in Distance Learning for a six week period, ending on September 25, and using this day as our first marker for evaluation.

Our school calendar will remain the same with our orientations and community days taking place via Zoom. All students will meet all their teachers on Wednesday, August 19th via Zoom. Our classes will officially begin on Thursday, August 20th with all students participating in Distance Learning five days a week in an ABCAB model. Please [click here](#) to familiarize yourselves with Mercy High School's Distance Learning Program. We are finalizing our schedule as a Tri-School community, and it will be shared with you in August.

Some families have worked with us directly for on-campus individual attendance plans, and we are awaiting further direction from the county on this. We will share more information as it becomes available.

Please know this decision was not taken lightly. Though we would love nothing more than to bring your daughters back onto our beautiful campus, safety must come first. The number of positive cases continues to rise not just in our county but also the surrounding counties in which faculty, staff, and students live. One thing we have seen time and again in all the COVID-19 news is that there are so many factors that are simply out of everyone's control. Our faculty and staff deserve a working environment and your daughters deserve a learning environment with greater certainty.

We recognize the importance of providing your daughters with consistency as they begin a new school year. There is no doubt in my mind that should we start in person that we would likely transition to Distance Learning within days or weeks. The stress and anxiety that these day-to-day unknowns could place on your daughters is not ideal, and it would interfere with their ability to experience a true Mercy education. To ensure all students and families have peace of mind as we begin the school year, we feel as a Leadership Team that this is the best mental health decision for your daughters.

You can be confident that your daughters will receive a challenging, supportive, and tailored education in Distance Learning. In the spring, students and parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the Mercy Distance Learning model, according to survey feedback. Test scores on AP tests (two of which had 100% pass rates) indicate that students received high quality instruction in those last crucial months before the exams. Mercy teachers train on and develop new, research-based instructional strategies for distance instruction on a weekly basis.

As we continue to shift our plans I hope you find great comfort in knowing that we are ready and prepared for a full Distance Learning program as well as a Cohort Hybrid Model when the time is right for our students, faculty, and staff to return to campus. I encourage you to familiarize yourselves with the components of both programs by visiting our website [here](#).

We know that this year will likely bring various transitions between our Cohort Hybrid Model and our Distance Learning Model. We will continue to pivot and adapt as the needs require us to do so, and we are incredibly thankful for your patience, understanding, and partnership throughout the year. To be mindful of your time and inbox, we will send the Summer Mailing Part 2 out tomorrow.

Without hesitation we will rise and meet the needs of our students as our Mercy mission has always led us to do. The Sisters of Mercy were known to serve all who came to them even when they lacked the proper resources to do so. The early Sisters of Mercy were always creative in how they ensured education was provided, and nothing makes me more proud than to follow in their footsteps during these times. We continue to be inspired by the early Sisters of Mercy, their commitment to bringing education to all, and the great success they had due to their unwavering faith in their mission's work.

Wherever Mercy Sisters taught, the values were the same. For us, however we teach during the 2020-2021 school year, the values and curriculum will be the same. Our education will remain rooted in the Gospel values and Mercy mission and always centered around social justice, the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy, and the dignity of every student. The educational heritage of the Sisters of Mercy will continue in our work with your daughters, and we will thrive as Mercy always has in times of unknowns and firsts in history. It is our honor to walk this COVID-19 educational journey with you and your daughters.

Sincerely,



Natalie Cirigliano Brosnan '02