

Dear GCU students, families, faculty and staff:

We trust that you had a peaceful and relaxing Christmas break as you celebrated the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, and we are excited to have you back on campus.

The first week of the semester incorporated an online instructional model to provide students with greater flexibility while travelling back to campus after the holidays. Face-to-face instruction begins today with the same hybrid learning model that was successful during the fall semester. For many quantitative types of courses such as science, math and business, the blended instructional model will be structured to provide students even more in-class engagement through video conferencing software with instructors.

The hybrid learning model with reduced class sizes, mask requirements and physical distancing was very successful in preventing coronavirus infections during the fall semester. Through our contact tracing efforts in the fall, it was clear that classroom/laboratory settings were not key vectors in spreading COVID-19.

As a reminder, in-person instruction ends April 1 for about 80% of classes, followed by two weeks of online instruction April 5-16 and spring break April 19-25 to finish out the semester.

Vaccine update

GCU has been approved to dispense the COVID-19 vaccine following the five-phase protocols set forth by Arizona health authorities. Details on those protocols and the timing of different phases in Maricopa County can be [found here](#).

The University is also in discussions to use our 27th Avenue location as a POD (point of dispensing) for the public as we continue our efforts to assist Maricopa County's COVID response. There may be opportunities for GCU faculty, staff and students who support the POD to be eligible to receive the vaccine, even if outside the Phase 1A and 1B eligibility criteria. More information on that will be forthcoming.

COVID cases in Arizona

Positive COVID cases in Arizona are at their highest level since the pandemic began, with case averages among the highest in the nation. As such, it is critical for members of the GCU community to double down on their efforts to take necessary safeguards.

In addition to wearing a mask, practicing physical distancing, avoiding large gatherings, being outdoors when possible and practicing good hygiene habits, students should remain on campus as much as possible, creating some semblance of a bubble, rather than go off-campus to socialize.

Students, staff and faculty did a fantastic job adhering to those protocols during a successful fall semester. We learned a lot about the virus over the past several months. Working together while showing grace and compassion to one another, we're confident the mitigation and response measures that are in place will help ensure a positive start to 2021.

