

## **OneBeach message video – “Answering Questions”**

Hi, I'm Jane Conoley, president of Cal State Long Beach, with another OneBeach message during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for taking the time to learn more about what we are doing to mitigate the challenges we're all facing.

In this video, I discuss some of the issues we are working on and answer questions you may have. Before I do that, it's important we recognize some somber realities:

- There's still a lot we don't know about the coronavirus. Most importantly, for us, is that we don't know when it will be safe gather in groups. Epidemiologists predict that while new cases and deaths may decline over the next month and into June; a second wave of COVID 19 is likely by next October. Hard dates are impossible to provide given the nature of the pandemic and we could be facing another 18 months of safety precautions.
- While situations differ across the state in terms of infections and deaths, we are located in LA county --the hardest hit in California. Further, while perhaps most, but not all, of our students are likely to weather an infection with minimal symptoms, many faculty and staff members are over 60 and another unknown percentage of students, faculty, and staff have underlying medical conditions that will make them susceptible to the most serious effects of the virus. Long Beach State, while accomplishing its educational mission, must be guided by one priority: the wellbeing of everyone on our campus.
- Several work groups are involved in academic planning for fall 2020. While I don't have all the reports, I can predict that early in the semester we will be mainly virtual. Perhaps some face to face and hybrid classes will be possible in special cases. I do not want to replicate this Spring semester with a sudden pivot to remote learning. We must have models of instruction that can be sustained for all of 2020-21.
- And when it comes to fiscal matters, the chancellor put it this way: “Revenues are down and costs are up, and we believe the situation will only worsen in the fiscal year ahead. Thankfully, we have some

reserves to help offset some of our one-time expenses. But belt tightening remains inevitable.”

### **When will staff return to campus?**

Plans now call for all non-essential personnel to work from home until at least May 25. The true return date depends on the advice of our public health department. I know we'll stagger the return so that we add to campus density gradually. Precautionary measures will have to be in place.

### **What about student housing?**

One of our biggest questions is whether we can have any residential students in the fall. While we might have leave from public health to offer single rooms only; you can imagine both the health and economic challenges in providing a residential experience for a greatly reduced number of new and returning students.

### **What's the latest on actual COVID-19 cases at The Beach?**

Seven students have tested positive since the pandemic began. All have or are recovering from mild symptoms. Four staff members and one contractor were also confirmed as positive. We know of no new cases, although we instructed several staff members to self-quarantine when they reported possible exposures to the virus.

### **What is happening with our budget?**

Our current campus plans call for a 5% reduction in spending starting in July; that's about \$24M. We'll do that in order to be better prepared for an expected mid-year cut. We've also instituted a slow-down in hiring and all non-essential travel has been suspended until July 31.

### **The shift to online instruction has been challenging. What is being done to improve the situation?**

It's clear that many of our students need better support to thrive in a remote environment. The sudden shift from in-person learning to remote instruction uncovered a serious digital divide among our students. So we'll have to figure out how to establish a permanent computer loan program and

increase Wi-Fi coverage in our public areas, including parking lots. In addition, we'll seek funding to add seats to our student virtual lab, so that more students will be able use campus-licensed software programs away from campus.

We'll also offer, this summer, faculty educational experiences to improve their comfort in remote delivery, as this is clearly an important new educational asset we must have available to our students for an uncertain future.

### **What's happening with Commencement?**

Graduating students recently received a survey seeking feedback on the possibility of a virtual celebration this summer. Plans for a virtual commencement are being made in concert with student leadership.

An in-person Commencement is still planned for late Fall. Again, that's tentative based on public health advice. I, for one, am certainly looking forward to shaking hands with the much-tested class of 2020.

### **What about the financial well-being of our students?**

We'll begin dispersing federal CARES and other sources money this week directly to low income students and others who have been hurt financially by the pandemic. We just learned that we'll also receive additional federal money based on our status as a minority serving institution. We will, no doubt, be looking for ways to bolster our Basic Needs Program, scholarships and other student-focused support through private philanthropy and other grant opportunities.

### **How about athletics and other student organizations?**

It's highly unlikely that we'll be able to have fans at our fall sporting events. In addition, we're working on developing – if at all possible - strict safety protocols for our student athletes as they train and play.

All student organizations from rec sports to ASI will certainly have to take precautionary measures if they gather in person.

### **What about the incoming class?**

The Beach received over 110,00 applications, which includes 102,000 undergraduate applications, and 8,000 graduate applications. Of those numbers, we are admitting about 4,800 freshmen and 4,800 transfers. We are very much on track, right now, to meet our enrollment goals.

In closing, I want to thank you for the OneBeach spirit that makes all the difference when it comes to overcoming difficulties. I think this is our collective moment in history, and like those before us who faced the disruptions of world wars, plagues, and economic collapses it demands our best. Fortunately we have each other.

Until the next message, be well.

We are OneBeach.