



MEMORANDUM

TO: Teaching Faculty

FROM: Barbara G. Lyman, Interim Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

DATE: August 16, 2021

SUBJECT: **New Student Profile & Contributing to Student Success**

Welcome to the 2021-2022 academic year! While continuing to navigate evolving challenges associated with teaching and learning under COVID, we are looking forward to implementing our plans for a safe, in-person fall semester and to returning to residential campus life. The unwavering dedication shown by faculty to our students and their success this past academic year helped them to make the most of their college studies, often thriving against all odds. Thus, I am confident that faculty will work with students in compassionate and supportive ways while advancing students' academic as well as personal growth and development in the coming year.

New Paltz once again received the most applications of any SUNY University College, with over 16,500 students applying for undergraduate admission. We expect that, by the start of term, we will have enrolled:

- Over 1,000 first-time freshmen
- About 700 first-time transfer students
- A total of nearly 7,700 new and continuing undergraduate and graduate students

Our incoming students are academically well prepared and very diverse, with 41% of first-year students and 40% of new transfer students coming from traditionally underrepresented demographic groups. Your classrooms will include students from New York (95% of freshmen, 97.5% of transfers), Arizona, California, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Virginia. Their preferred majors represent a broad cross-section of our academic programs, and their co-curricular interests are likewise varied. They have been involved in their home communities as volunteers, artists, actors, entrepreneurs, athletes, and activists and are excited to engage with their New Paltz peers and with the broader campus community.

We also look forward to welcoming more than 80 new international students to our campus community this fall. The vast majority of them either already have a WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccine, or will be provided with one upon arrival to the U.S. The pandemic has been a challenging time for international education and exchange at SUNY New Paltz and all around the world. While study abroad remains on hold for the fall 2021 semester, our Center for International Programs is continuing to work with domestic and international partners to provide students with global learning experiences in online or hybrid formats.

As you are now aware, on August 6, the College restored the on-campus, indoor mask requirement for everyone, including those who are fully vaccinated, effectively immediately and continuing into the

fall semester. As conditions evolve, further changes may be made this fall. The most current guidance on public health requirements for campus spaces, including classrooms, can be found [at this link](#).

In addition, you have available to you a newly updated [Faculty Resource](#), designed to support you in addressing pandemic-related considerations in your seated and virtual classrooms. Also, our colleagues in the Division of Student Affairs have developed [new guidance for faculty related to medical documentation](#), published on Academic Affairs' website (see "Instructional Resources"). See also the [Psychological Counseling Center's guidance](#) regarding consultation services in support of student mental health.

Also posted on our website under Instructional Resources are redesigned [syllabus requirements](#) and our [accessible syllabus template](#), which includes the fall 2021 Maintaining Public Health statement. New this year is the opportunity to include in your syllabi [a link to a webpage on which selected academic policies are posted for students](#), eliminating the need to list individual policy statements in your syllabi. Remember, too, the resources in your Blackboard account, under My Community, including the "Accessible Classroom: Faculty and Staff Toolkit." (If you do not see this community listed, please submit a ticket at <http://support.newpaltz.edu> and you will be added.)

Policies that provide critical support for student learning, retention, and timely graduation can be found in the [Faculty Handbook](#), posted on [Academic Affairs' website](#). Please review these policies, which will help us reach our shared goal of graduating superbly educated students who will be proud New Paltz alumni.

Additionally, please note these important items (also addressed in the *Faculty Handbook*) that may impact the scheduling of your course material and course policies:

- **Final Examination Schedule:** No major examinations should be given during the last week of classes before the final exam period. A final exam must be given in all courses during the assigned time in the five-day examination period or on the Common Examination Day each semester. Final exam schedules are found in the [Academic Calendar](#) under the "More Calendars" drop-down menu. Just select the "[current semester] Final Exams" link.
- **Religious Observances:** Students who will be taking time to observe religious holidays should communicate with faculty, coaches, etc. as soon as possible regarding absences for religious observances and be prepared to discuss plans for making up missed work. Faculty and staff will continue to respect the needs of our students and, in compliance with the New York State Education Law (Chapter 161, Section 224), honor students' requests for such rescheduling and collaborate with them to determine a path to make up missed work. While you are not required to place this information on your syllabus, you may find it helpful to embed it into your attendance policy statement.
- **Black Solidarity Day** is Monday, November 1 (observed on the first Monday of November, the day before Election Day, and noted on the Academic Calendar). During the week of November 1, we encourage faculty across all disciplines to consider incorporating materials or discussions that explore African and African American contributions. Please also consider encouraging student participation in appropriate extra-curricular programming (talks, seminars, panels, movie screenings, etc.).

We remind you that, in observance of Black Solidarity Day and according to [New Paltz policy](#):

- No tests, quizzes or graded assignments of any kind should be issued or due on Black Solidarity Day.

- Students who choose to participate in Black Solidarity Day should notify their professors beforehand and will not be held accountable for absence on that day.
- If your course is offered in the fall, you may find it helpful to include information about Black Solidarity Day in your attendance policy statement.

Please draw your attention to the following **student resources** that offer important academic support to our students:

- The [Office of Academic Advising \(OAA\)](#) partners with the academic departments in support of sound educational planning and timely degree completion for all undergraduates, from matriculation to graduation. The OAA's general advisors are primarily responsible for advising undeclared students while faculty advisors are responsible for advising declared students in their respective major. The OAA collaborates with the academic departments in clarifying College policies, procedures and curricular requirements for all students. This partnership extends to supporting student learning and persistence via the Starfish online student success platform. The OAA is also responsible for supporting faculty in advising efforts. To that end, an OAA liaison is assigned to each academic department to facilitate communication and effective collaboration in support of our students' success. [Click here](#) for additional info.
- The [Center for Student Success \(CSS\)](#) provides students with peer-based academic skills coaching and advising, online tutoring, subject tutoring in historically difficult courses, and writing support across the curriculum. CSS services are intended to enhance, not supplant, other forms of collaborative learning. The Center also manages the campus-wide student success platform, Starfish. Please visit our website to learn more about the services offered this fall.
- The [Disability Resource Center \(DRC\)](#) coordinates classroom and/or testing accommodations related to a disability. Any student who requires such accommodations should contact the DRC (Haggerty Administration Building, Room 205; 257-3020) as close as possible to the beginning of the semester. The DRC will then provide instructors with Accommodation Notifications verifying the need for accommodations. Specific questions about services and accommodations may be directed to Jean Vizvary, Director (visvaryj@newpaltz.edu).
- In partnership with academic and professional faculty, the [Office of Veteran & Military Services \(OVMS\)](#) makes every effort to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals who must be absent due to military obligations. The student and faculty member must agree that the length of the absence is reasonable for the type and structure of the course and must devise a written plan detailing expectations for successful course completion. Students who actively participate in the United States Military Reserve or National Guard are highly encouraged to provide each faculty member, as well as the OVMS, a copy of their Reserve and/or National Guard schedule during the first week of class each semester.

Note: The [undergraduate student military leave policy](#) and the [graduate student policy](#) are available online for reference.