

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Video Title: OneBeach – "Reuniting The Beach"

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CONOLEY:

Hello. I'm Jane Conoley, president of Cal State Long Beach, with another OneBeach message. This time, I want to share with you the steps we're taking to fully reunite our students, faculty, and staff back on campus.

We may have moved in-person instruction to alternative modes, but we have never closed. As you've seen in some of our other OneBeach messages, faculty and staff members have been working hard and our campus has remained open throughout the pandemic.

We have been in non-stop planning and acting mode since early March, when we quickly moved to remote instruction and staffing. The great news is that we graduated about 10,500 students and finished the semester strong with thousands of others.

I'm also happy to report that we've documented only 11 cases of COVID-19 among our students – all with mild symptoms. Seven staff members reported positive tests; all have recovered.

Over the past three months, as we acted in real time to accomplish our educational and health missions, we were also planning for the upcoming fall 2020 semester. Like many others, in March we had little doubt that we'd be back to "normal" by late August. Sadly, despite gradual re-openings in our society, we know that will not be the case as the virus is still spreading and ravaging some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

When it comes to returning to campus, we must first balance a number of health and safety concerns. The safest strategy is to use only remote instruction until there's a vaccine, but there are other forces that make that impossible. Here are a few of the variables:

- Guidance from Long Beach and Los Angeles County public health departments identifying, especially, the optimal size of gatherings for safety.
- Further guidance on physical distancing students and faculty in our classrooms, reducing classroom capacity by as much as 75 percent.
- Course offerings that cannot be delivered remotely.

- Assurances that our students and employees will follow public health guidelines for physical distancing, handwashing, and mask wearing.
- The ability to clean our buildings – frequently - to reduce surface transmission of the virus.
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- Concern over our campus’ potential to become a danger to the rest of the community because of asymptomatic COVID infections.

There are many more issues, but these rise to the top of my list.

Currently, we imagine offering a little more than 355 sections of classes in-person in contrast to last fall when we opened 9,700 sections. These were determined after careful evaluation of all courses and most are upper level science, health, engineering and arts classes. Only about 3,000-4,000 students will attend in-person classes, compared to our usual 38,000.

In addition, we are planning to have about 1,000 students living in our residential housing. Some of these will be our athletes, who will return gradually in compliance with safety protocols from our public health advisors and the NCAA. Also, we will transform our dining to “grab and go,” provide our staff with appropriate PPE, and open only about half our buildings so that frequent cleaning is possible in the remaining buildings.

You may have read that other universities are planning for an in-person fall semester and might be wondering, “Why not The Beach?” It remains to be seen whether these universities actually will be primarily in-person when start dates arrive. It is our belief that by preparing The Beach for primarily remote delivery, we can more easily pivot to the familiar face-to-face should conditions change than successfully do the reverse.

We want to be fully transparent to our new and returning students and their families so they have time to plan and reflect on their next steps. In the meantime, many of our faculty are engaged in professional development to further enhance remote delivery of instruction.

Despite all of the difficulties we are dealing with, this is exactly the right time to lean into earning a university degree. California and the nation are challenged by complex issues swirling around us – the pandemic, racial injustice, climate change, immigration, international conflicts and a recession. The world needs our teachers, scientists, nurses, health professionals, engineers, artists, thinkers, and business professionals and thankfully, it will be our bright minded graduates who answer the call to meet our many challenges.

I’ll keep you updated as planning the reunite the Beach continues, and we’ll continue to keep our website current with the information that we know. It’s complicated work.

Until the next OneBeach message – be safe and be well.

And remember – we are OneBeach.