

**Session 1 Parent Orientation Session  
A Welcome from the Leadership  
August 13**

**Baylee Kowert-- Monitor**

It is my pleasure at this time to introduce the 16th president of Austin College, Steven O'Day to welcome you and start the session.

**President Steven O'Day**

Parents, I wish you were here. But, let me be the first to welcome you to the 172nd year of Austin College. On behalf of all of us at the College, I am proud to welcome you to 'RooNation. Obviously, this is not how any of us envisioned welcoming you, but we are living in a different world, aren't we? This is the first of 5 virtual parent orientation events where we expect to share with you some details of what we have spent every waking moment planning for the past 4 months. In a moment, I'll turn it over to Dr. Beth Gill, vice president for Academic Affairs.

I'd like to remind you of a few things, that in these surreal times it might be easy to overlook. I look forward to meeting you at some point. My wife, Cece, and I live on campus. One thing your students will hear from me when they arrive, pretty quickly they will learn where the President's house is. I want to share with you what I share with them-- if the lights are on at the front door, that means we're there. That means if you are in trouble and you need to talk, you just need to knock on the door and it doesn't matter, day or night, we'll answer. I can't promise we'll be pretty, but we will answer. And, we'll talk them through whatever it is. That's important to us. That's the kind of culture we have here at the College.

Second, believe it or not, the journey is about to begin. I want you to know your daughters and sons are not alone. This is a real campus family, whether you're physically here or learning remotely, we're here for them and everyone is here for each other. As the journey unfolds there are so many moments and opportunities. If I can offer one piece of advice I say to fully experience Austin College and all it has to give your student would do well to engage, to talk to people, meet people, to go out of their comfort zone. If they do that, there are no limits. And lastly, we talk a lot around here, particularly at this time of year, about being "Roo-sponsible" What we mean by that is: go to class, get sleep, don't forget to eat, and manage your time. Be good to yourselves and to each other. That is true whether you're here or learning remotely this semester. That's been a hallmark of this community, never more important than now as we ask everyone to take on a little more responsibility for everyone's health and safety. Know that in this time of pandemic everything is going to look and feel a bit different on campus. We will be counting on our students to help in the efforts to make this place as safe as it can be for everyone. Yes, we will wear masks, yes, there will be social distancing in and out of the classroom, we have reconfigured classrooms, reconfigured traffic flow, daily health assessments, and adjustments to the daily routine. We ask if you can put in a supportive word for us with your students to take on this responsibility. We will appreciate it. Know that your daughters and son are ready, and for 172 years we have been transforming students so they can transform the world, and Covid or no Covid, that goes on. We're ready, too. Enjoy the evening.

Dr. Beth Gill, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Thank you President O'Day. My name is Beth Gill, I am vice president for Academic Affairs here at the College. It is my pleasure to welcome you and my honor to spend this evening with you and share information. I represent our student-centered faculty, academic programs, and academic support services, and the experiential learning opportunities your student will have. I support the faculty so we can enhance your student's experience and success. We are all responsible for their health and well-being. We had a campus-wide convocation service this morning for staff and faculty on campus. One of the things that was said is we are looking to make the experience safe and meaningful this fall. So, what I'd like to do is take you through a day in the life of your student and look at the semester also.

Our faculty have spent the entire summer in workshops, sharing ideas, learning new technologies, practicing on each other in an effort to create what we are calling a high-flex learning experience. The experience of the remote student will be very similar to that of the in-person student.

Beginning with the remote student, classes begin August 25. Before class starts they will have been contacted by their professor to give them a sense of what the class is about and what they can expect. The first-year seminar faculty member will be their mentor the entire time they are at Austin College-- those are close bonds.

Remote students will log in and synchronously engage with the professor/students in the class in real time. Designed to feel part of that community on-campus learners. If a student thinks they may need some help from the writing lab, the library, or a tutor-- that can all be accessed synchronously in a virtual environment. All students have the same support as those on campus. Students can attend lectures, concerts, and most activities remotely. Everything has been designed so that all can interact in real time and have the opportunity to feel a part of each other's lives.

The in-person student will have been contacted and know what to expect. They will be developing close bonds with the first-year classes just like the remote. When they wake up they're going to complete a daily health screen on their student app. That's going to give them a "pass." They can use that pass to enter classes, to be on campus and participate in daily activities. If symptoms arise, that student is immediately referred to Health Services for further health screening or for whatever support they may need. The student will not be penalized for missing classes this semester due to any health concerns.

The student on campus will attend class both in person and virtually. We have configured all our classrooms to meet CDC standards for social distancing. The students and professors will all be wearing masks, there are hand sanitizers, and the room will be sanitized before and after class. We are going to great lengths to create a safe environment, but when we reconfigured the classroom for health and safety, we cut down on the number of available seats in the classroom. The professors have organized their classes so that half the students will be in class one day, say on a Tuesday, and on Thursday they will be virtual and the other group will attend. This will allow for safety and maximum engagement amongst the students. They will have access to all concerts, lectures, services, facilities on campus both in person or virtually if necessary if they choose.

Now I'd like to turn to a semester in the life of your student. Classes begin on Tuesday, August 25, bright and early at 8 a.m. a few weeks in, after our students have talked with their mentors, our new students will be able to register for our unique January Term courses which will be offered on campus at this point, and possibly virtually and remote, depending on the

circumstances. About midway through the semester, everybody loves a fall break. Friday, October 9, is a day off. Classes resume the following Monday.

After the students return they begin meeting with their mentors and planning out the spring semester. They register early in November; then Thanksgiving Break is November 23-27. This year classes resume, remote only for all. Students can return if they need, but there will be no in-person classes or campus activities after Thanksgiving. Finals will be conducted remotely. Everything ends December 11, 5 p.m. with the last final.

Tim Millerick, Vice President for Student Affairs

Hello, welcome and we're glad to have you here. In the year of Covid we've been coordinating things differently, like this program tonight. First let me say this, thank you for your patience and understanding as we've pulled our plans together, both with timely knowledge and practical understanding of the best health and safety of your student here on campus and remotely.

Couple of things your son or daughter should have been doing at home. Ask them about these! First, the college has long been doing online training around drugs and alcohol with a video program to give students a common understanding about coming to campus. They should have received an email with a three-part training series called "Not Anymore" from Vector Solutions. We track and can see if they are in process to complete the training. It's helpful to them and to our programming on campus once they get here.

Most students have told us how they wish to proceed for learning this semester, remote or on campus. You may talk with your student about what they've chosen, what are the expectations, and if they wish to change their choice. It's important for us to know that and helpful for us to be able to manage the campus.

Late Thursday and Friday are designated for students to move into their residence in a relaxed manner. The health screen procedure actually begins within 24 hours prior to coming to campus next week. Access the mobile app, download the health screen and complete it. Green badge says the student is fine and can come into the hall. Those with a red badge suggesting they have a health issue that means they're not in the position to come onto campus. Students with a red badge will be told to stay home until they can contact our Health Services and quarantine. We have been asked if we have required our students to self-quarantine before coming to campus. Required? No. Encouraged to quarantine, and lay low, before they come in the days before? Yes. But, the Health Screen on the student app will allow them to know where they're at. They will not be allowed to enter the Residence Hall if they have a red badge on their health screen. So, we will send those individuals home or send them over to Health Services depending on their circumstances for follow up with whatever support we may need including the possibility of rapid testing.

There are often some last minute details that you may need to address. This year, we've spread it out--in the chapel will be financial services for those who want to clarify your bill. In the small chapel will be health services where you can make sure you have insurance and health records up to date. Your son or daughter should have already selected a move in time, if they have questions that remain they should email [campushousing@austincollege.edu](mailto:campushousing@austincollege.edu) and we'll get back as soon as possible. Those with particular health questions should write to [roowellness@austincollege.edu](mailto:roowellness@austincollege.edu).

This is a learning process, a rich and engaging learning process. All of us are here to support the student in their progress, in their setbacks and the times they need support. Together we'll work to be supportive as they go through this transition--which is clearly impacted by Covid and is very different.

Regarding quarantining and health support. We have a sophisticated protocol for when a student identifies themselves on the health screen and needs further follow up. Testing procedure would be the next step. Should a student test positive and need to be isolated or quarantined, we have stair step approach to that. Those whose family lives nearby we would want to send home for quarantine. If that is not possible, we will quarantine on campus. We've set aside a number of rooms on campus and we have partnership with a couple of local hotels nearby if we get overwhelmed with our quarantining.

Students who are off campus already and tell us they have tested and have Covid, we would want them to stay where they are. We would help them with support, and work with academics to get the support they need to continue with classes as they are able.

Another big topic of interest is meal plan refunds due to Thanksgiving week. Unlike the restaurant down the street, we worked off a community pricing approach to do the best we can with charges that are passed along to your family. We have established a refund policy that takes us through the first 5 weeks, after that, it does not provide for a refund. At five weeks we have encumbered the cost to deliver meals at a high quality. Labor, inspections, licenses, and food have become fixed costs to us. Some have asked about a Thanksgiving refund because we have scheduled for students to stay home after that holiday to complete the semester and finals remotely.

Emergency communication is often a concern for parents. The College has a protocol about communicating about emergencies. We have a system where we keep a very, very high level so you know it's serious should you get an alert. We do not use it a lot to send out generalized messages to parents. On campus we will report out to the campus and post accordingly on the protocol on the Covid website.

## Q&A

### **Austin College App, how does it handle the daily health screening? Does the health screening occur only at the point of move in?**

The health screening will be placed on the app prior to the move in. It pops up as a push notification every day. Working with our public health expert, Dr. Saritha Bangara and we have alumni in the Covid-response business across the nation who have been helping us. There are certain clusters of symptoms that indicate we need active steps with the students. They will have opportunities to learn from each other and folks who have been thinking about this for months. Every day, at 7 a.m., to get into their phone, they will have to do the health screen. Faculty and staff too, we're all in this together.

### **For move-in time frame , is it a hard stop at the hour?**

We're making it an hour, hard stop in the room. We need them to move on from the hall so the next people can move in. They can go check in, follow up on things in the open area, out of the residence halls.

### **May students return after Thanksgiving Break and have dining service?**

Yes, we will remain open in the dining hall. We feel that when students go home for Thanksgiving it will be in their best interest and the best interest of the College if they just stay and finish out the week and do their finals. But we know there are circumstances for students that will bring them back to campus, and we will work on those one-by-one in the Student Life office. The food service program will be open consistent with how many people are on campus and what is needed.

### **Are the classrooms cleaned between classes?**

Yes, they are. When a class leaves and when a class comes in. The professors are going to facilitate that cleaning because they are as concerned about the health and safety as anyone. Also the bathrooms on each floor will be cleaned regularly and often. We have taken every precaution in the academic buildings to make them as safe and clean as possible.

### **How will lab spaces work for remote learners?**

Actually our scientists worked all summer with folks who make virtual experiences as real as possible--folks who do that for a living. They've been conducting experiments and filming all summer--not only for our remote students, but if we all go remote like last spring, they want all students to have that rich laboratory experience. They conduct the experiments live and show the students. I've seen them doing it--they have these hats on with the GoPro and they're down in their research and they're conducting it. And the students have real-time access to the data. They are responsible for manipulating that data and writing up lab reports. It's as real as it can possibly be without being in person.

### **What are the guidelines for leaving campus to move around the community, travel home for weekend visits and Fall Break? Do students have to stay on campus until Thanksgiving break?**

I don't think we're in a place where we can tell students they can't leave campus. But, we hope that through the programming and education students and others will understand why we're even bringing this up. The more folks can stay on campus, be a part of this place, follow our protocols consistently and not go introduce something from off campus that we can't account for or know about--it would be better.

We would certainly want them to evaluate the necessity to leave the campus and unknowingly bring something back. It allows us to do the best we can, here on campus, with engagement.

### **Are thermometers and masks provided to the students?**

When the students move into the residence hall or check in as commuters they will receive a welcome pack. It will have a 'Roo-branded mask, hand sanitizer, and will have a thermometer. Bring your own masks, and if someone needs a mask they can just ask Student Life for one.

### **Is there a capacity limit in Residence Hall rooms regarding visits?**

We've adjusted our protocols regarding visitors to a Residence Hall. When we get here and get settled next week, we'll have a Cluster meeting with Resident Advisers (RAs) and we'll walk through that with students. Essentially guests are being limited for capacity issues.

We'd like to limit the rooms to the two roommates who live in the room. There will be plenty of other options to gather and see their friends.

### **What's happening with cleaning in the residence hall? Who is responsible for cleaning private spaces for the students?**

In the traditional halls, the college has a cleaning service with Aramark and has added staff for cleaning bathrooms and other public spaces. They are also available for an emergency or rapid response as well. We have an agreement to clean in rooms for a fee if students want. That's not something we've done in the past, but we'll work out how to bill it if a family requests. If a problem comes up amongst roommates, the residence hall staff would be responsible for working with them and with Aramark as necessary to work that out.

### **Are we going to be able to support on and off campus to support wifi and other technology?**

Our IT staff has spent the summer locating hotspots outdoors and plenty of bandwidth in the academic spaces. The professors have been given tech kits which include webcams, document cameras and more. We've spared no expense to get this right. We've assured our students that if we're going to do remote hybrid learning then we're going to do it in true Austin College fashion. We've also purchased several software packages that will better enable us to serve and engage students. And yes, our wifi on campus can handle it.

### **When can they start eating in the cafeteria?**

We'll be up and running with the returning students coming back on Tuesday, August 18. So for new students, we'll be ready to go whenever you arrive.

### **Can you leave campus for doctor's appointments?**

We are not putting limitations on students leaving campus. We're asking students to be responsible to our community by making good decisions regarding whether they should or should not be leaving campus for certain activities.

### **What outside spaces are available and how do we assure social distancing?**

There's a detailed set of expectations that are consistent with the states expectations for capacity for groups. When people submit for activities on campus the committee will sign off on capacity, food, health screen, etc.

We have suspended off campus community events coming onto campus to use facilities. We have already told groups that would seek to hold off-campus events, we have already told them we will not be approving those.

There will be a couple of outdoor classrooms that are equipped to engage remote students to attend virtually with wifi and electricity. I think students will discover some unique outdoor

experiences. There are many nooks and crannies on this campus that lend themselves to outdoor gatherings--this is a silver lining.

### **What are the fall sports schedules?**

The NCAA College Sports Division III has cancelled all competitive fall sports teams. They have created the capacity to practice, play and engage in strength and endurance training. Fall sports are still under review for some adjusted season to be played in the spring. That has not been worked out though.

### **If my roommate chooses to learn remote from their home, do I keep a single room?**

Yes, if housing looks different due to Covid, there will be no penalty or additional cost for the one on campus. If someone chooses to stay home in the fall and returns to campus in the spring, we're holding their bed and they will come in as assigned.

### **How many students are we expecting to return to campus to live and learn?**

The majority of students, approximately 950 students will be back on campus.

### **Are refunds handled differently if the College chooses to close in the pandemic?**

We've never had to "go there" until last spring. It will depend on the timing, circumstance and resources already encumbered and consumed.

### **Where do I get my college I.D.?**

Campus police will be in the Administration lobby on move-in day. You can pick it up there.

### **Will there be assigned times to eat?**

We evaluated that, and have not assigned times. However, we've taken over all available dining spaces in the Wright Campus Center. We've got chairs and tables socially distanced to meet the requirements for capacity. We're spreading out. It's been our experience students figure out their flow for the semester and it will take care of itself. We'll also have a robust grab-n-go program for to go food.

### **Will Dickey Fitness Center be opened?**

Dickey Fitness Center will probably look like a fitness center in your town right now. There will be capacity limits, a lot of cleaning, and likely be scheduled workouts. Under this situation, you go in, get your workout done and get out because other people are scheduled. A bit more structure, a lot more cleaning, and it will be accessible.

### **Do students need to bring their own wifi equipment into the residence hall?**

Residence halls are equipped with wifi and students have unlimited access.

### **What's the number for Campus Police**

903-813-2555. In the student app there is quick access to campus police which gives an immediate push button to call police. Campus police are in network with the Sherman police and

Grayson County law enforcement. They respond to all kinds of calls including lock outs, and escorts. They are an important part of the support network for your student.

**Should students know who their mentor is by this point?**

Yes, and I'm happy to let you know. [Bgill@austincollege.edu](mailto:Bgill@austincollege.edu). It can also be found in their schedule or in their email box.

**Will there be chapel services on Sunday?**

Every Sunday there's a student led chapel service in the small chapel at 6 p.m.. Also, early in the semester there's an event when students can come to the chapel and representatives from area churches take them as guests to visit their church. We found it to be a great connection with the community.

**Can student's bunk the beds?**

There's a bunking capacity in the traditional halls. If you want, let the staff know and they will help. We're not fond of letting people set up their own configuration.

**What's the procedure for parking passes?**

When you get to campus, you register your car with Campus Police and place the sticker so we know it's an Austin College car.

**What is the quarantine process for roommates of students with a positive case?**

We start with the person who has Covid, then accommodate the roommate. Then the app, with proper use by the students, will effectively trace where students have been and globally trace possible contacts.