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Seattle U Plans to Return to In-Person Classes in Fall 2021

Ashley Hagar, Staff Reporter

With students across the country learning online due to the COVID-19 pandemic for one year now, many are longing for a return to an in-person education as soon as possible. Luckily for Seattle University students, President Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J., announced the current plan for Fall Quarter 2021.

Sundborg emailed all Seattle U students March 1 informing them that the university plans to return to primarily in-person classes for the 2021-2022 academic year. While the university administration will continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and public health guidelines, the current plan is to begin as scheduled Sept. 22 for both undergraduate and graduate students, with law students set to start fall semester Aug. 23.

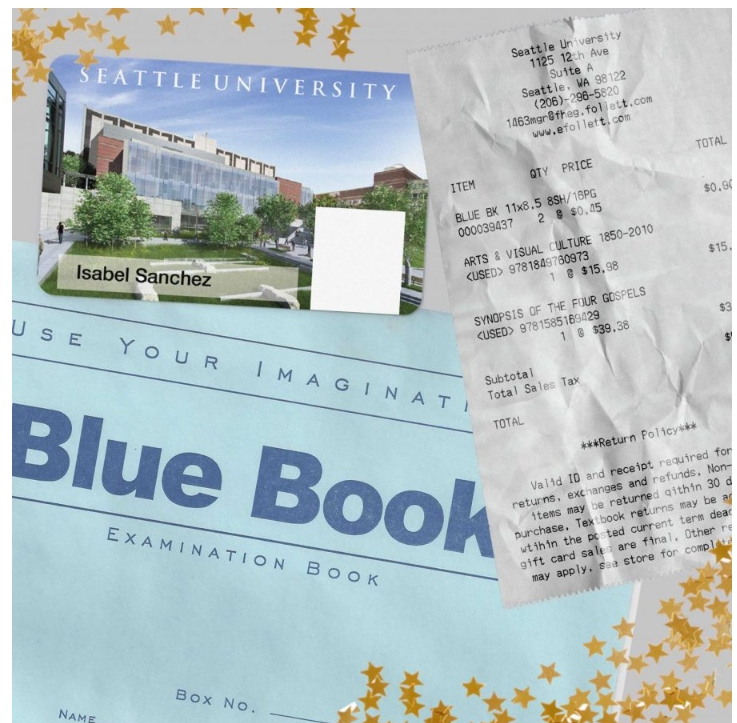
As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, first-year Psychology student Matthew Holme never got to have a traditional college experience through in-person classes. With Sundborg's announcement of Seattle U's plan to return to an in-person model of education, Holme is eager to get back in the classroom.

"I am beyond excited to be able to actually connect with my peers as well as my teachers, as I feel that it is very hard to do that over Zoom," Holme said. "There's no doubt in my mind that there will be an adjustment period, but that's okay with me if it means returning to some sort of normality."

Sundborg also noted the plan for Thanksgiving and winter break. In order to reduce travel risk for students traveling from and returning to campus, the majority of classes will finish the quarter virtually following Thanksgiving Nov. 25. He shared that the health of the Seattle U community remains the top priority when making decisions.

"All phases and aspects of our planning will continue to be informed by public health guidance as we prioritize above all else the health, safety and wellness of our campus community. This has been our commitment throughout the pandemic, and one from which we will not waver," Sundborg wrote in an email addressed to the community.

Second-year Business Pre-major Jay Grant also shared how he felt about the announcement to return to in-person classes. Excited to be able to better his education, Grant expressed concern over the safety of the transition.



Kim Nucum

"I feel very conflicted about returning to classes in the fall. I would like to be able to receive the vaccine before I return to in-person classes and also think that my classmates should receive it as well, although I know this may not be entirely possible," Grant said. "I definitely would love to return to classes in person, but it's hard to know what the future holds in terms of COVID-19."

In his statement, Sundborg mentioned that university residence halls will operate with mostly double-occupancy rooms. It is not expected that the university will need triple-occupancy rooms in the fall. Seattle U will also continue to have isolation and quarantine rooms available when necessary.

Interim director of Housing and Residence Life Tim Albert advised that although Seattle U plans to return to in-person classes as well as double occupancy rooms, there are still some unknowns about the specifics of how students will live on campus.

Albert encourages people to take advantage of opportunities to receive the vaccine. Doing so would allow for more changes to be made toward the traditional college experience.

"A lot of decisions will come down to how widespread vaccinations are and how effective they will be, especially as there are new variants coming out," Albert said. "I would encourage students that when you do have that opportunity, take advantage of it because the more people we have vaccinated the more likely we are able to return to a more normal experience."

While vaccination rates continue to increase, the variants of COVID-19 pose some threats to the return to normalcy. Administration will continue to follow all guidelines put out by the CDC and health officials when making decisions.