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Matt Parks

Seattle University

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Seattle U Community Readies for Post-Thanksgiving Shift Online

Matt Parks, Staff Reporter

As Thanksgiving approaches, the Seattle University community looks forward to celebrating the holiday. At the same time, the three-day holiday break will provide a transitional period for the Seattle U community as classes will shift online for the remainder of the quarter.

The Office of the Registrar announced last June that Seattle U would finish fall quarter virtually, unless otherwise noted, to reduce the amount of travel for community members during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Seattle U's decision to have virtual learning after Thanksgiving comes with a choice for students, who are given the option to continue living on campus or to return home. First-year Pre-major student Gretchen Franz shared how she feels about learning from home after the holiday.

"I have to say I tend to appreciate the opportunity to learn remotely, especially since this is our first year of college," Franz said. "It's nice to take baby steps into college. And it also helps that we really only have one week of school [online] after break."

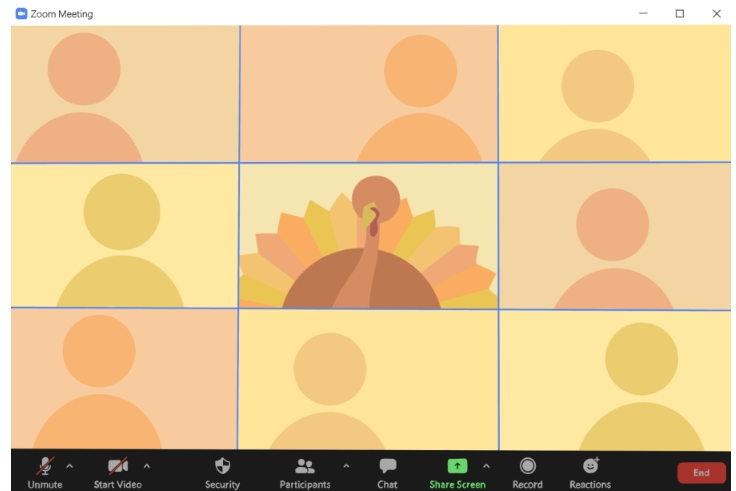
Fourth-year Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies major JP Newmann supports the decision to move classes online to decrease the potential spread of COVID-19. He appreciates that Seattle U is letting students have access to campus during the final weeks of the quarter—something that wasn't available last year.

"I'm going to stay here after I come back from Thanksgiving," Newmann said. "I just think I study best here. I like using all the facilities ... so I'm going to stay and do online [classes] in my house or the library. Granted it is limited, but we still have that opportunity whereas last year, we didn't have that opportunity at all."

For faculty who may have gotten acclimated back to 'normal teaching' this quarter, the shift causes an interruption to their routine. Associate Professor of English Sean McDowell sees the transition online as a "smart move" for "managing the pandemic," but acknowledges that learning from home can introduce a multitude of other distractions.

"Online teaching feels more like doing some radio talk thing ... where we introduce topics and people ask questions," McDowell said. "We try to have a different conversational dynamic ... So, I have to recognize it's a fundamentally different medium ... I don't approach it with any anxiety really; I'm just recognizing it's different and we're going to make the most of it."

The shift to online classes has other implications that will impact student life. Those who plan to not return to campus after Thanksgiving will not be granted a refund for housing or their meal plans, which has caused a stir among students.



Rachel Bentfield

“It’s definitely a little frustrating, although the people I’ve talked to on the Residence Hall Association have been relatively receptive to those concerns,” Franz said. “And I think I have seen some action being taken in order to remedy that like the pop-up store of the campus bookstore. I think they definitely heard kids complaining about this and that was a solution.”

Students who work on campus are also affected by the university’s suggestion for students to return home. For Newmann, who lives off campus and works at University Recreation (UREC), the online shift doesn’t change much for him. He explains how having the campus facilities remain open is beneficial.

“I think the only thing that really affects me are the limited hours,” Newmann said. “I tend to work a lot of mornings, and since we open at 9 a.m., that really takes away a shift or so, but still at least the afternoons are open ... I know for me and my upperclassmen UREC coworkers, we appreciate that there’s even that opportunity to stay here because a lot of us have jobs and internships [in Seattle].”

Before students shift to digital learning, many look forward to safely gathering with friends and family to celebrate Thanksgiving. Franz says she’ll be having a small home gathering with family. Newmann, who’s unable to return home for the holiday, will be spending a few days with his roommate’s family.

Thanksgiving will be a transitional time as the Seattle U community prepares to spend the last weeks of fall quarter online. But for many, the shift is a welcome necessity.