

July 7, 2020

Dear Governor's School Community,

Without question, everyone reading this letter would like to see a full return to regular, in-person instruction in our residential high school program this fall. Our Task Force on School Reopening has been at work since early summer gathering information and preparing for that goal as well as for a range of other possible scenarios. All summer, school leadership has been at the virtual table with other districts and schools across the state and nation. We have been monitoring public health conditions on a daily basis. Specifically, we have been following the CDC's federal guidance for schools and administrators, our state Department of Education's AccelerateED recommendations, and DHEC data on their own and in reports aligned with the SCDE recommendations. We have also been connected to cutting-edge research on the performing arts in this health crisis, and we are following recommendations from national arts organizations and studies.

As of today, all three criteria in DHEC's assessment place Greenville County in the highest possible risk categories. We are not in a declining pattern of COVID-19 spread, which is a key CDC guideline. The health and safety of our students, staff, and their families remain the top priority in our decision-making. We cannot in good conscience expose our campus community to this level of risk by reopening in person in August.

In order to protect the health and safety of our students, staff, and their families we will:

- Shift to a virtual platform for the fall semester of the 2020-21 school year. Employees will meet for their scheduled professional development days August 11-14. School will start on this virtual platform as scheduled on August 15 (new students) and August 16 (returning students).
- Cancel in-person fall performances and campus events. We will work towards virtual programming if/as it's feasible by department. Orientation, family weekend, our college fair, and our First Look admissions event will shift to virtual platforms.
- Plan for resumption of in-person instruction on campus after the January 18, 2021 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, if/as public health conditions improve. We currently recommend that students and families self-isolate for two weeks prior to this return.
- Continue to explore the option for day students beginning in January.
- Put a premium on the mental health and wellness of all students and staff. We will continue to offer individual services in a telehealth model in addition to group work.

In order to achieve our mission of pre-professional instruction in an environment of artistic and academic excellence, we will:

- Evaluate each student's academic load carefully, considering courses that could be deferred in order to allow maximum focus on intensive arts work from a distance and upon our return to campus.
- Register students for some academic coursework with VirtualSC and/or Connections Academy. Some of our own teachers will have "virtual" sections of their regular courses all year. These online options will allow us to create class sizes small enough to enable a safe return to in-person instruction. Details will be forthcoming from the Guidance office as we work with each student/family individually.
- Gather virtually for schoolwide humanities programming to include Why-Days and other seminars, events, and student-led experiences.
- Prioritize process over product across the arts curriculum, especially for the fall. Our summer task force has dubbed this the big "rethink"; not of what we do (train young artists) but of how we do it for this brief period.
- Explore the feasibility of bringing small groups of students back to campus for brief residencies (two-week intervals) this fall. This may be possible to schedule by art department or class.

In order to build and sustain community, we will:

- Launch loud and strong with a reimagined orientation in August.
- Carry out critical work on diversity and inclusion, with a focus on engaging and supporting all students and staff.
- Connect students to their house communities, so they begin to build ties with other students and their RLC's.
- Intentionally forge bonds within art departments to support the sense of ensemble, studio, and collaboration so critical to the Govie experience.
- Engage through student activities and events and incorporate student leadership.
- Continue to host engaging virtual programs for students and families, including but not limited to family weekend, college fair, outreach, and admissions events.
- Celebrate, gather, and collaborate via Zoom and other platforms that will help us stay connected.
- Collaborate with parent leadership through the Govie Parents Council and School Improvement Council.

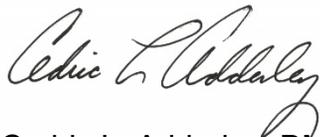
As disappointed as we all are, this is not simply a return to the eLearning and remote work we all experienced last spring. We have time to plan. We can dedicate resources to the technology and materials you need to have at home. We know how to run a statewide delivery system to get iPads, books, and supplies to students in early August. Teachers may be able to work on campus, using their studios and classrooms with the vastly-improved technology available there.

Please understand that the decision to move to this virtual scenario is part of a larger plan to return to in-person instruction when it is safe to do so. We've focused on in-person, virtual, and hybrid scenarios, with a goal of being prepared to pivot

between them as conditions change. We've measured classrooms and studios. We've installed plexiglass and ordered new check-in equipment. We've reimagined the daily schedule and met with Aramark to reconfigure food service. All this work is in place so that students and staff can return to residence in the future.

Across the instructional and residential programs of the school, we will use this challenge as an opportunity to drill down to the most essential, engaging, and vital elements of what we do and who we are. At this afternoon's Zoom meeting we will answer questions and share information. We will continue to be in touch directly in the weeks ahead, and we humbly ask for your trust in the expertise at work in these decisions. These are significant but *temporary* challenges to the experience to which we are all deeply committed. We will bring new students, families, and staff into this unique learning environment, and we can't wait to welcome back our returning Govies and look to their leadership and partnership as we move ahead together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cedric L. Adderley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "A".

Cedric L. Adderley, DMA
President

