

College Responses to Student Questions Regarding Residence Halls

In response to an email to 30 residents of Moore Hall asking to pack up their rooms so that Moore could be used to house health care workers from area hospitals, students submitted questions to Student Government about their concerns about this process and other aspects of the College's response to the COVID-19 emergency. On April 21, the President, the Provost, and the Dean of Students hosted an open forum for students to address their concerns. This document provides the College's response to student concerns. Any issues not addressed below may be directed to the Dean of Students at Kyle.Dailey@cedarcrest.edu.

1. What is happening to non-healthcare worker rooms?

At this point, only Moore Hall is being designated for healthcare workers. Why? Because there are currently no students living in Moore. Since we would not house health care workers in residence halls with students still residing there, it is our only option. If there are students in other dorms who wish to have their belongings packed by trained essential personnel, we will certainly assist as soon as we have completed Moore.

2. What is happening to contraband items that were in the students' possession? Are they going to be subject to disciplinary action or just discarded?

Our primary goal is to pack belongings to assist healthcare workers and our community. While we understand that there may be items in the room that are against our housing policy, our focus is moving forward with that assistance. Items that are illegal will not be returned to students. Depending on the nature of the item, further conversations may need to be had with the student at the judgment of the College.

3. How can students ensure privacy for intimate objects such as undergarments?

The trained essential employees who will pack student belongings all identify as female and have agreed to keep confidential what belongings are being packed.

4. How can we be connected with the person who is packing our belongings? How can I trust them?

Students will be emailed the night before their room is packed with the name of the trained essential employee (packer) who will be working with them to pack their belongings. The email will also let them know that the packer will text them prior to entering their room with a picture of themselves and asking if they prefer to be communicated with by text, phone call, or FaceTime. Students will also be contacted after their room is packed with a picture of their room.

5. How will my items be differentiated from my roommate's?

If both residents volunteer their room to be packed, the trained essential personnel will communicate with both residents through either text message, phone call, or FaceTime to help make decisions about what items belong to which resident. If only one resident volunteers to have her room packed, the other resident must agree to be in communication with the trained essential personnel, so they can work together to identify which items belong to which resident.

6. Are there other ways to support healthcare workers in the Lehigh Valley without invading our privacy?

As you may have seen, the College has been a source of support for our local community and health care systems. Over the past 5 weeks, we have received multiple requests to support our community in this way. We understand your privacy concerns and have made this wave of requests voluntary.

7. Where will my belongings be held?

After being boxed, belongings will be stored in Moore Hall storage areas (once filled we will store in Butz Hall storage areas). All areas are secured by lock and key and boxes will be clearly labeled.

8. How will my stuff be protected from weather or bugs in storage?

No belongings will be stored in the elements. These are storage areas that the College uses for its own property.

9. How will rooms and facilities used for healthcare workers be sanitized after use to ensure the safety of our students?

Our CSI team is working around the clock to ensure rooms across campus are being deep cleaned and sanitized according to the state and federal requirements. This is being done regardless of whether healthcare workers occupy the rooms.

10. Can classrooms, the TCC, or Lees be used as housing instead?

Our other facilities on campus do not have the facility requirements needed to house medical staff. For example the TCC and classrooms do not have showers available. Lees Hall has limited shower capacity, but the housing must be single occupancy.

11. If not to pack our room, could we have time to enter the residence halls to grab some items that were left behind? Can students in the area volunteer to pack rooms instead of staff?

The governor has only given permission for students to travel to pick up items necessary for their health or for items needed to continue their learning remotely. Nothing else may be taken and access must be approved by the Dean of Students and Campus Police.

12. Why is the college/packing team not responsible for items they damage they caused during packing and transport?

The waiver is to protect both the College and the student. We are taking the utmost care in packing belongings. We understand how important this is to you.

13. If we decline packing, when will we be able to pack our own stuff?

At this point, that is unclear. Until the governor gives permission for the belongings to be obtained, we are unable to provide a definitive answer to this question.

14. Can our belongings be shipped to us?

We are working on a plan to have this as an option for students who are unable to come to campus when the state lifts travel restrictions.

15. Why didn't the college address this May 11th deadline sooner?

The nature of this pandemic and the resulting measures enacted by the state to fight it have been incredibly dynamic. The College has endeavored to make thoughtful and deliberate decisions as quickly as possible using the information available to us.

16. How can we fix the waiver to make it more inclusive to student needs?

The College has waived the normal policy of assessing a fee for rooms occupied after May 11th. Please contact Kyle Dailey, Dean of Students, at kyle.dailey@cedarcrest.edu for any questions you have regarding the waiver.

17. Why did we wait so long to prepare for this situation in comparison to other Lehigh Valley schools?

The College has been in constant communication with our counterparts at LVAIC schools and believe that we have all taken very similar actions, since we are all guided by the same state orders. What differs significantly between our institutions is the placement of spring break in our academic calendar. Schools

who had not yet had their spring break when the order came through had some added flexibility that we did not.

18. Why were we not given the option sooner to retrieve our belongings before it was too late? In late March? Why weren't students encouraged to move out in March?

Despite our efforts to be in regular communication with the state, the College did not have advance notice that the Governor would issue a stay-at-home order in March that would include travel restrictions preventing students from coming to campus to collect their belongings. While the outcomes of this have created stress and uncertainty, we also believe it helped protect our campus community from a widespread outbreak that could have occurred here.

19. Why can't I come onto campus if there is no travel ban?

In PA, the governor has issued a Stay At Home Order. This is a travel ban for those that are not considered essential personnel and for any purpose that is not life-sustaining. The governor has given the authority to the state police to pull over and ticket any non-essential traveler. The President has contacted our state many times asking for relief of this order to get belongings back to students and we have been outright denied as this is not essential travel.

20. Why don't the seniors get their own ceremony in August? Will it still be at the PPL center?

Cedar Crest looks forward to celebrating our graduates at a Commencement ceremony, when our community is safely able to come together. A ceremony is currently planned for August 22, 2020 at the PPL Center that will recognize our graduates while welcoming in the new academic year.

21. How is Cedar Crest going to support students from here on out? How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?

The College will continue to support our community throughout our online learning period by providing all student support services remotely. The College apologizes for any distress or frustration the email sent out last Thursday caused. Once we heard from students and others in the community, College leadership met and took action to address concerns.

22. Why is the pass/fail system not universal? Why are some majors not allowing this?

The Credit/No Credit policy applies to all Cedar Crest courses. Majors that have regulations for pre-professional licensure or accreditation may have minimum required letter grades.

23. I am a student that is having difficulty online and my teacher is not being receptive. What can I do?

Students having difficulty with an online course should first reach out to the instructor to explain the issue and propose ways of handling it. If a disagreement over an academic matter remains unresolved, the student may then follow the Student Appeal Process for Academic Decisions found in the Student Handbook (p. 9), which includes requesting a review of the matter by the department chair: https://www.cedarcrest.edu/studentaffairs/pdf/2019-2020%20Student%20Handbook_Updated%20S2020.pdf.

24. What will happen if we are online again next semester?

Cedar Crest is following guidelines from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Allentown Health Bureau for when and how conditions will be safe to resume in-person classes. Should social-distancing measures be required during the next academic year, the College will deliver courses and academic programs in a way that ensures students may continue to meet their degree requirements and be eligible for financial aid.

25. My summer class got cancelled that I need to graduate. Will I still be able to graduate on time?

Ensuring that students are able to make progress towards their degree is a top priority for the College. If changes to the summer schedule will impact your progress, please reach out to your academic advisor to discuss your situation. You can also contact Calley Stevens Taylor, Dean of Student Success (cstaylor@cedarcrest.edu), for assistance with this issue.

26. Why wasn't there a higher degree of leniency in our classes throughout this stressful situation?

Cedar Crest recognizes the stress that the sudden conversion to online instruction, necessitated by COVID-19, created during the spring semester. For this reason, the College has endeavored to ensure students continue to have access to quality instruction, are able to maintain progress toward completing their degrees, and are able to maintain their financial aid. The Credit/No Credit grading policy was enacted to address the stress and inequities created by this situation. Additionally, many faculty are working creatively with students who are having technology challenges, are ill, are caring for family members, or experiencing other unexpected challenges.

27. What is happening with refunds? Why have other schools received funding back and we have not?

The Student Financial Services office has been working around the clock on refund calculations. The announcement of refunds will be going out on 4/24 and refunds will be issued to eligible students on 4/30. For students who have signed up for e-refund, the distribution will happen quickly. Those students not signed up for e-refund need to expect at least a 2 week lag until the check is received due to mail lag.

28. Are commuters going to receive refunds for technology fees or facilities fees?

Commuters who have meal plans will receive a pro-rated refund for the meal plan not used. Other student fees, including Activity, Course and Technology fees remain non-refundable as the College continues to employ those funds to deliver courses, activities and support virtually.

29. Are the students going to be better represented for the remainder of the semester in discussions? How can we ensure better, clearer, more consistent communication from the administration in the future?

College leadership will continue to meet with Student Government to discuss student questions and concerns in our continued response to COVID-19. Students and their families can reach out to the Dean of Students if they have any questions or concerns that need to be addressed.