



**Distance Learning Update:
Extension of Distance Learning Program Through the End of May**

This memo is intended to provide additional information on the extension of our distance learning program through the end of the academic year. As we communicated last week, we have made the difficult decision to continue with distance learning through Friday, May 29. Our decision aligns with Governor Baker's recent announcement that all schools will remain closed through June. I know this is disappointing news for many and it is certainly not how I imagined we would wrap up the 2019–2020 academic year. However, our faculty have demonstrated extraordinary feats of teaching and learning these past few weeks, and I am confident our students will close this school year having had meaningful, authentic, and intellectually engaging learning experiences. While we have not yet finalized all decisions related to the end of the academic year and other end-of-year events, this memo will provide updates on senior classes, senior projects, and the end of the academic year timeframe for students in grades 9–11.

Before diving into some of these details, however, I want to acknowledge the difficulty of maintaining momentum, motivation, and a positive attitude during this time. I know our faculty are working tirelessly to meet the needs of all our students. At the same time, I know that each student and family's experience of distance learning is different as families juggle work and school from home schedules, health concerns, and various obstacles that may interfere with learning. I also know that students and families may be concerned about the impact distance learning will have on future academic opportunities. I want to assure families that our priority right now is the health and wellbeing of our students and maintaining a climate of care and strong relationships within our community.

Denise Pope, the co-founder of Challenge Success and a senior lecturer at the Stanford University Graduate School of Education, in a [recent message to families](#) reminds us to “broaden our definition of learning” and encourages parents to “think about how to help kids continue to develop *skills* rather than trying to recreate *content*.” I think we can agree that this experience is teaching all of us a great deal and the skills and character traits developed now—resourcefulness, creativity, empathy, independence, communication, resiliency—will serve our students well. While no one would choose to teach these concepts in this way, it does not lessen the positive impact these traits will have on individuals and our community in the future. Thank you for your ongoing partnership, patience, and care as together we help our students to stay healthy, make meaning of what they are learning, and stay connected to our community and each other.

Senior Classes

Senior classes will end on Friday, May 15. This was the original date for seniors' last day of classes, and we plan to adhere to this timeline. The College Board pushed back the dates for AP exams by one week, and therefore AP exams for some students will extend into the week of May 18. As a result, some teachers may offer review sessions after May 15; however, there will be no required academic classes for seniors after May 15.

Senior Projects

Seniors will transition to a modified senior project when classes end. The senior project period will begin Monday, May 18, and end on Friday, May 29. The senior project committee has been working hard to revise and reimagine our [senior project expectations](#). We remain committed to this final graduation requirement because we feel it is essential for students to find meaning in their last weeks at Pingree by engaging in a project that serves as a capstone to their secondary school education. At the same time, we recognize that for many of our students, original senior project plans are no longer possible or feasible to complete. With a focus on choice, creativity, and flexibility, we have adjusted our expectations and generated a list of possible senior project options for seniors to complete independently or in small groups. The hour requirement has been cut in half and we have modified how seniors will showcase their projects. Seniors should check in with their senior project advisors by May 8 to communicate revised plans.

While seniors are working on senior projects, they will be encouraged to continue attending advisory and community meetings as a way of staying connected to the Pingree community during this time. In addition, senior project advisors will host virtual gatherings for their senior project advisees to share experiences and have time to connect socially during the independent project period.

End of Academic Year for Students in Grades 9–11

We are still working to finalize decisions about final academic experiences for students in grades 9–11. In the meantime, we want to make you aware that we are looking toward developing asynchronous projects that are tethered to current courses and provide opportunity for student choice and independent learning. More will be shared in the weeks ahead. For planning purposes, all planned academic programming will conclude on Friday, May 29. Though there may be some final community events and advisory meetings during the week of June 1, there will be no Reading Day or traditional final exams.

Course Registration for Students in Grades 9–11

The Curriculum Committee is in full gear approving new courses and finalizing our course catalog for the 2020–2021 academic year, and we are on track to open course registration in May. More details about course registration, course placements, and our course catalogue will be shared in early May, but a general overview of our course registration timeline is as follows:

- **Tuesday, May 5:**
 - School meeting for students in grades 9–11 to hear from department chairs and the Office of Academic Affairs regarding course registration

- A detailed summary of course registration will be shared with parents
- Course Catalog released
- **Wednesday, May 6:** Course Registration Opens
- **Friday, May 22:** Course Registration Closes
- **Mid-July:** Class lists and information about summer work and book purchasing mailed

Note: The summer course list mailing, which is typically released on July 1, will likely be delayed by two weeks to allow enough time for course registration to happen remotely.

Academic Planning and College Counseling for 11th Graders

A detailed memo from the College Office was shared with 11th graders and their parents this week. We encourage 11th grade students to continue to meet with their college counselors as they engage in their college search process and consider courses for next year. The College Office will also be sharing various videos and asynchronous presentations in place of their weekly community education classes and Junior College Parent Night event.

Academic Planning and Introduction the College Office for Parents of 9th and 10th Graders

The Office of Academic Affairs and the College Office will be hosting our annual information night for parents of students in grades 9 and 10. Originally scheduled for Thursday, April 16, this event has been rescheduled for **Thursday, April 30, at 7:00 p.m.** Please join Assistant Head of School Kristin Brown and Director of College Counseling Meghan Farley for a virtual overview of the course registration process and an introduction to our college counseling program. We will use a webinar format to share information and answer your questions. *A separate invitation will be sent to 9th and 10th grade parents that includes access information for the webinar.*

Updates to Daily Schedule and Upcoming Schedule Reminders

Based on student feedback, we have adjusted our daily schedule by moving our community meeting time to later in the day on Mondays. We will meet as a full community at 12:30 p.m. on Mondays followed by advisory meetings. Morning Meeting will remain at 8:30 a.m. on Fridays. Though we have shortened advisory on Mondays, we want to maintain our full advisory block on Fridays to ensure that students and advisors have enough time to meet in groups and individually once we begin our course registration process.

As a reminder, Monday, May 4, is currently scheduled as a planning and prep day for our faculty and staff. There will be no classes held.

Resources to Support Our Program

A reminder that our resource centers continue to operate during our distance learning program. The Educational Resource Center, Writing Center, Quant Center, and Community and Multicultural Development Office are all open during the week for drop-in sessions during open office hours and for individual meetings by appointment. The Counseling Office is also open daily. Director of Counseling [Molly Murphy](#) is available during open office hours Monday–Friday from 3:00–4:00 p.m. and at other times by appointment. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Molly if

you are concerned about your child's wellbeing during this difficult time. Our [Health and Wellness Resource Guide](#) continues to be a useful source for families during this time as well.

Ongoing Communication

As distance learning continues through May, please do not hesitate to reach out to us with questions and/or concerns. Teachers solicited feedback from students last week, and they will continue to check in with students about how to best support them regarding workload, communication, and use of class time. We are also grateful for the feedback we have received from parents. While most of the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, we know there are ways we can continue to improve our distance learning program. In particular, we have heard concerns that due to changes in assessment and the format for learning, students may have gaps in their understanding and academic record that will impact their performance and opportunities in the future. Please be assured that as we continue to refine our academic program, something we do annually at Pingree, we will certainly be taking into consideration our current learning environment and we remain committed to designing a program that meets students where they are next year and every year after.

These are unprecedented times for education, and it is important to remember that all students across the world are experiencing these uncertainties and disruptions together. We know that for many adolescents the stress and anxiety associated with the college admission process is only exacerbated by these circumstances. At the same time, we are heartened that so many colleges and universities have proactively shared how they will adjust their admission processes for secondary school students at all grade levels. They have repeatedly emphasized that students will not be disadvantaged as a result of the disruption they are experiencing now. We also know that we can not predict or make promises about what the future will hold for your children. But we do know every one of our students and we will be their most committed advocates and vocal ambassadors as together we navigate the uncharted territory ahead.