

Full Statement from AIC

In recent years small, private, liberal arts colleges and universities in the Northeast have faced challenges of declining populations, fewer college-age students entering institutions of higher learning, and increased competition amidst a plethora of schools in the region. Introduce a once-in-a-century pandemic and those same institutions are faced with making unprecedented decisions in order to remain viable. The past few months have been filled with extensive planning by the College, and I am pleased to announce we will re-open for the fall as announced to our campus community yesterday.

In March 2020, American International College made the unanticipated move to remote learning in response to COVID-19. In an effort to offset expenses incurred during this time -- including extensive technology costs associated with delivering content remotely through the semester's end and residence and meal plan reimbursements -- one-third of the administrative staff, totaling nearly 100 individuals, were either furloughed or laid off. No faculty were included in the initial round of furloughs and layoffs.

In early 2020, prior to the coronavirus, the College began to prepare for an estimated \$5 million reduction in spending as a result of declining revenue. A salary freeze for all employees was an initial step. At that time, it was determined that five degree programs within the School of Business, Arts and Sciences would be eliminated in advance of the fall semester due to declining enrollment. Biochemistry, chemistry, history, English, and political science had seen significant decline in registrations over time and were no longer viable. In fact, only nineteen students were currently majoring in these programs combined. The decision to discontinue these degree programs was shared with Faculty Senate in January and with the Board of Trustees shortly thereafter.

In April, the College began the process of identifying the impact of the pandemic on its finances, taking into account the news on the national level that, in this unprecedented time, fewer students would be attending college at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, the ability of current students to continue studying would be affected negatively, and that AIC had a higher accounts receivable as a result of encouraging students to continue with their studies despite the impact the pandemic may have had on them economically. Both administration and faculty were advised to identify areas from which to reduce costs. President Maniaci apprised the Faculty Senate Chair and Chair-elect that significant cuts were required to reduce expenses in response to the needs of the 2021 budget and the pandemic-induced loss of revenue; these reductions were not to be limited to operations and were to include tenured and non-tenured faculty positions as a last resort.

As part of the process, and in the spirit of shared governance, three faculty task forces were convened and charged by Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Mika Nash to address recruitment, retention, and faculty workload. The task forces met regularly over the course of two months, each creating a document listing actionable items. The retention task force developed a list of recommendations, many of which are moving forward. The recruitment task force created a list of potential new programs, some of which are under exploration, in addition to ideas for updating existing programs. The recommendations of the faculty workload task force, charged with identifying \$1.5 million in cost savings, ultimately did not meet the threshold for cuts that was given to them, thus requiring the administration to make the necessary reductions in expenditures.

In addition, as part of the shared governance process of the College, faculty input was strongly considered by the academic deans and Dr. Nash, who was in charge of academic planning related to the

pandemic. Meanwhile, the College began assessing the impact the pandemic could have in academic year 2021 and forecasted a potential shortfall of up to \$17.2 million, depending on how the pandemic affects the College this fall and winter.

Dr. Nash said, "As part of the shared governance process, the faculty workload task force was invited and encouraged to participate in the process of identifying the \$1.5 million needed in reductions from the academic budget. Ultimately, this pandemic has forced decisions that no institution ever wants to make, and losing programs, faculty and staff is incredibly difficult. We know how committed our faculty are to our student body and to the AIC vision. We wish the outcome of all of this were different."

The Academic Association of University Professors (AAUP) stipulates that tenured faculty should only be terminated for malfeasance or poor performance, program discontinuation, financial exigency or near financial exigency. If faculty at AIC are indeed laid off, it will be consistent with guidelines provided by the AAUP.

"American International College is no stranger to making very tough decisions in order to secure the future of the institution," stated Board of Trustees Chair Frank Colaccino, a 1973 graduate of AIC. "With 72% of students enrolled in just 28% of programs offered, in order to remain viable the College cannot continue to support programs that have experienced continually declining enrollments. The impact of the pandemic has added to the criticality and urgency of addressing this situation."

"As American International College prepares to open this fall as it has for 135 years, it will do so in support of the academic enterprise with a focus on the future of the institution and furthering its vision of providing access and opportunity to a diverse community of students," AIC President Vince Maniaci said.