



News Release

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Ridgewater Summer Sessions Go Online, Fall Semester Will Use a Flex Format Start

WILLMAR and HUTCHINSON, MN – The global pandemic and related government restrictions have disrupted lives for everyone, including the educational experiences for students. The situation is also making it challenging for colleges like Ridgewater to make concrete plans for course delivery in the summer and fall terms.

But students want to know what to expect, and hundreds of students are in the process of registering for summer and fall courses.

“Safety is our top priority,” explained Ridgewater President Dr. Craig Johnson. “It is the guiding principle for all of our COVID-19 discussions and decisions.”

Campus Access, Summer Semester & Summer Hours

With the transition to distance learning after spring break this past March, Ridgewater’s campuses have been closed to the public, open only for current students who need to access essential technology resources like computers and the internet. That situation will change temporarily beginning May 18 through May 29, as the college will close to both the general public and students, with the exception of a drive-up book return May 18-20.

All summer session courses will be online only this year, with sessions beginning June 1 and July 6. To accommodate technology needs for students in online summer courses, both Ridgewater campuses will be open from June 1 to July 31, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, for students needing access to computers and the internet.

“All staff and student services will continue to be available virtually for all current, new and prospective students. We will support our students going forward,” explained Laura Kuvaas, Director of Marketing, Recruiting and New Student Experience.

Fall Semester Flexibility

For fall courses beginning on August 24, students, faculty and staff are being asked to remain flexible, as much will depend on the pandemic status and how best to ensure safety for students and employees.

“If it is safe to resume face-to-face delivery at the start of the fall semester, we will do so; however, we don’t have any certainty at this time,” Johnson said. “For now, we are preparing for remote delivery for the start of the term so we can readily shift to face-to-face instruction as soon as reasonable during the semester. By preparing now, we will give our

faculty and staff time to provide students with the best possible learning experience. It will also be less problematic to shift back to face-to-face instruction on short notice.”

Learning remotely via technology isn’t necessarily the same as online instruction. Students who register for courses that are not designated as online will still need to commit to the days/times of their scheduled classes. If face-to-face classes cannot resume at the start of fall, but can do so later in fall, students will be able to attend their classes on campus as scheduled, hopefully without having to make adjustments in their weekly routine or work schedule.

Although about 45 percent of Ridgewater’s students had taken one or more online courses prior to the pandemic and are familiar with how they work, the college is aware that online education is not the preferred choice for many students and faculty. In particular, Ridgewater’s outstanding technical programs attract students who enjoy learning through hands-on experience. Ridgewater is committed to returning to its strong tradition of face-to-face, on-campus instruction when it is safe to do so.

“We recognize the uncertainty of the situation is challenging and may cause some anxiety,” Kuvaas said. “We want our students to know we are committed to making their experience the best it can be and will support them however we can during this time. Ridgewater College is here for our students, and we will continue to be here for them.”

For the latest information about how the pandemic is impacting Ridgewater College, go to www.ridgewater.edu/covid-19.

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Ridgewater College is a community and technical college with campuses in the central Minnesota communities of Willmar and Hutchinson. The college serves more than 5,000 students through its nearly 100 academic programs and more than 68,000 training hours for individuals and businesses through customized training and continuing education. The college is a member of Minnesota State and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Minnesota State includes 30 community and technical colleges and 7 state universities serving approximately 400,000 students. It is the fourth-largest system of two-year colleges and four-year universities in the United States.

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