

Fellow Westmonters, it's wonderful to be on the phone with you tonight. As we get underway, I want to wish Evan Grahn a happy birthday! Today is his 20th birthday, and we're looking forward to having him back on campus very shortly.

I want to go over some of the details for the fall and where we stand with the governor's orders and guidelines as well as the county public health officer's guidelines and then turn it over to other members of the executive team to go over details related to academics, student life and financial aid.

The governor finally released his guidelines last Friday and provided the general framework for how we can pursue higher education in California. It's a 34-page document. Many of you have already downloaded and read it. The general framework demonstrates that we either meet or exceed virtually every guideline outlined there. We felt good about that, recognizing that several of the indicators we had along the way have been good guidelines for us to pursue, and we've been spending much of the summer hoping we'd be able to repopulate.

The county always has to comply with the governor's guidelines, but the county can impose even stricter guidelines, and they have. The current state of affairs in the county is that we're not allowed to repopulate yet. But Jason Tavarez, our new risk mitigation officer, had contact today from the county indicating that although the daily infection rate hasn't come down to the level we need, they're cautiously optimistic that we'll be able to repopulate this fall. So today we're making plans: We're going to have to start on August 31 remotely. But we really believe we'll only have to be remote for four weeks, and we plan to begin repopulating on Friday, September 25, Saturday, September 26, and Sunday, September 27, and then start education in person with face-to-face classes on Monday, September 28. We believe that all the work we'll do virtually—Orientation and the first four weeks of remote education—is a minor inconvenience and that we'll get back to campus. We're very grateful to know that we appear to be on a pathway to repopulating.

In the midst of this, we've received a lot of questions about the health and safety of our faculty, staff, students and administrators—the whole Westmont family. I want to assure you this is absolutely a top priority for me—for our entire executive team—but it's equally a personal interest. My son, Ricky, is a senior; he'll be living in the GLC. It matters greatly to me that he not get infected or sick. I have a nephew who'll be a junior and a niece who'll be an incoming first-year student. It's important to me that they not get sick. As we meet our professional responsibilities, each one of us also has a particular connection to individual students that we really care about, and we want to know they're safe. We also want to know we're safe. And as you know, Pam and I live in the president's home on campus, and so whatever happens to campus happens to our house. We're interested in living in a safe environment.

I want to emphasize this point because Santa Barbara, and especially South Santa Barbara County, has one of the lowest infection rates in the country. If you track our numbers, you know the county goal is to keep below 100 new infections per 100,000 residents. Fewer than 500,000 people live in Santa Barbara County. The population of LA County is 10.4 million people. That's why it's likely we would be able to repopulate just 90 miles north of LA International Airport.

Concern has been raised that students coming to campus and faculty and staff who've traveled outside the area or the state could carry the virus back to the community. That concern reminds us that we have to be responsible citizens and how we're going to have to populate campus when we're allowed to do so.

We'll start classes remotely on August 31; that's less than three weeks from today. To be willing and able to repopulate, we'll deploy a number of the strategies we've already prepared for. We'll be doing testing that qualifies you to be on campus; we'll be doing additional random testing throughout the semester. If you get infected, we'll be doing contact tracing. We're prepared to do quarantining. Of course, we're going to deploy social distancing. Dr. Fauci continues to emphasize the importance of social distancing, face coverings and hand hygiene. These are all high priorities, and we've outfitted the entire campus accordingly. We also know there are areas we shouldn't go, and right now, many of those are closed. Then, of course, no large crowds. We'll do an orientation online, but we also hope we'll be able to welcome you as you come to campus that first weekend.

If any of you want to come to campus now—I know my son wants to sneak down and see his room in the GLC—if for any reason you need to come to campus, you have to let us know. We can't just throw the gates open. Everything has to be based on essential needs. We ask that you coordinate with us and let us know that you're coming, so we can stay in compliance. Again, it's part of us being good citizens in the community and doing our part to keep a safe environment. We'll have to comply with a number of practices.

Why are we optimistic about this? Just today, news was released that we're on the cusp of an at-home antigen test that will allow us to determine whether we have antibodies in our systems—a quick baseline test. Pfizer Company just took over production of remdesivir, the drug therapy that seems to treat COVID-19 effectively. They've said they should be able to meet global demand by the first of October. So it looks like we're on the pathway to a reliable therapeutic. We know there's positive news regarding vaccines and that they're ramping up production hoping that the third-phase clinical trials prove the vaccine is effective. Meanwhile, we'll provide flu vaccines on campus if we're allowed to repopulate. When the COVID-19 vaccine becomes readily available, we intend to provide it and make sure everyone willing to get vaccinated has the opportunity to do so. People have asked: Will students, faculty and staff be required to get one? We won't require it, but we'll highly recommend it and hope everyone is willing to do it.

I want to say again how much I've appreciated and value how hard the members of the Westmont family have been working. Our faculty have gone overboard preparing for the unknown. Are we going to have classes in person? Are we going to be remote? I've participated as I teach a Presidential Fellows seminar. I've also participated in two of the technology-enhanced environments to help us adapt new practices. They've been so helpful in getting us ready for the variety of challenges we'll face. Probably 90 staff members have been in and out of campus throughout the summer getting everything ready so we can repopulate as safely as possible. It's been a joy to see the student workers who've been here. It's so odd to see people,

but so refreshing. It reminds us of the core, the heart of our purpose: We're here to educate, and we love doing it. We love doing it face-to-face. I have loved the versatility we've shown in pivoting to a remote environment, a Zoom environment. But we look forward to being back together, believing it's the best way to undergo a life-transforming education that prepares us to fulfil the purposes God has given us on earth.

I'd like to turn it over to Mark Sargent, our provost, who will walk us through some of the elements of our academic program.

I'd like to start by just echoing some of the president's words of appreciation for our faculty. They have worked really hard over the summer to get prepared for multiple possibilities. We've had numerous workshops on different aspects of remote learning. I know we all made a big pivot last spring in the midst of an emergency situation, but some faculty were committed to continue developing their skills and new innovative approaches to make the learning experience for this first month a very rich one. You'll see new techniques, some new equipment, some more creative in-class and out-of-class experiences. Faculty love to share ideas with one another and adapt to new challenges. We hope that even though we're starting remotely, you'll still feel the attentiveness of faculty and their creativity in the work you experience.

Just a few practical matters: As they've done previously, your professors will reach out to you and make contact before the start of the semester. They'll provide the necessary information if you're going to be studying asynchronously; they'll make sure you have a syllabus and the appropriate assignments and ways of connecting if the class will meet synchronously. You'll get the appropriate link to log on and the information necessary to prepare for the first week. Some of you may want to make some changes in your schedule, and you're welcome to do so in WebAdvisor. As long as the class is open, you have the freedom to make those changes. If you need any assistance regarding any aspect of your schedule, you can write to the registrar's office at registrar@westmont.edu or call the student records office and talk to someone who can counsel you. We realize some students would like to take all classes remotely this semester, and you can still apply to do that. We'll be interested in your reason, and we'll work with you to set a schedule that suits a remote-learner experience. The application can be found on the registrar's page, or you can simply write to the provost's office at provost@westmont.edu, and we'll send you the link. We'll make sure you get that material.

Throughout the semester, we'll continue to provide all the key academic support services. Our student success efforts will continue, and we've hired some student success coaches. The Office of Disability Services and the Writers' Corner have arranged for remote appointments, the tutoring program will continue, and some remote tutoring sessions will occur. We've tried to align our tutoring opportunities with particular courses, especially in the general education program, but there'll be other opportunities for students who seek that assistance to get it. We're preparing for a remote beginning, but we want to make sure the first month is distinguished by a positive Westmont experience, and we look forward to serving you in this way.

I'm going to hand it over to Dr. Edee Schulze, who will talk about the student life dimensions.

I've been asked to answer the question: How should I begin preparing for a possible future move-in date? First, stay flexible regarding the date. You've heard we're targeting the weekend of September 25, 26 and 27 as move-in dates. We expect the county to approve the repopulation date. However, we need you to be flexible, because we have not yet secured that permission.

Last week, I heard a speech by a gregarious, energetic woman named Liz Bohannon. She's a person of faith, and she said when we're in situations that feel threatening to us, when we feel nervous, when we feel anxious, maybe even fearful, there's something we can do. She said we're all beginners at doing college in a pandemic environment. All of us have experienced some of these feelings. Liz Bohannon says, "own your inner beginner" when you're in an anxiety-producing situation. I want to challenge us all with that. I feel new at navigating a pandemic. You'll feel new at navigating a pandemic when you come back to campus. I want to share what Liz Bohannon said: Your inner beginner can help you become more courageous, more creative and more innovative. Choose curiosity over criticism. That's one way of tapping into your inner beginner. Studies show that curiosity is the number one trait of thriving, and it will help you navigate ambiguity—which we have a lot of—and complex situations more effectively. That's my second piece of advice: Tap into your inner beginner and choose curiosity over criticism.

Third, be ready to come back to your room on campus. If you've been a student here at Westmont, you know you need permission to live off campus. Why? Dr. Beebe alluded to the fact that we provide a certain kind of education, and we love doing it this way. We believe you access the best of Westmont when you live here. I know you might be tempted to stay home after our repopulation date or you might even be thinking of signing a lease here in town and trying to get permission to live off campus. But we still believe a residential experience on campus is best for academic success, building friendships across the student body, engaging with people who are different from you—and research confirms this. We want you here because we believe that.

I want to reassure you, as others have and will, that our plan for repopulation is solid and comprehensive. You love Westmont, and you signed up to study here. I encourage you to accept the challenge of living in community even when it's outside your comfort zone. You make us better by being here and living here. If you want to come to town before our repopulation date, we have a limited number of off-campus Westmont options available. You should contact housing@westmont.edu about these options. They are not long-term leases and not Ocean View, but short-term opportunities for you to live off campus in a Westmont-provided option. Email housing@westmont.edu for more information.

I've been asked to answer this question: Do students have to wear masks at all times while on campus? The answer is yes. Wear masks on campus both indoors and outdoors unless

you're in your room or running on the track. We expect that you will wear a mask—that all of us will wear masks.

The next question is: Are international students able to remain on campus or is there another off-campus plan? We have several international students right now who were unable to go home in the spring. They're here and living in Ocean View, and they'll be able to stay in that housing until they move into their assigned room on campus. Any international student who has questions about this should contact Sarah Sagredo at stulife@westmont.edu. We're also aware that some students have medical or safety reasons that make living at home difficult. We want to work with you to provide an option in either OV or one of the off-campus facilities I mentioned. Again, contact housing@westmont.edu, and we'll work with you.

I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Reed Sheard for some information on technology.

I been asked how the college and IT in particular will support your online learning. The help-desk services run by academic technology and user services will provide support for all software faculty will use during our distributed learning environment the first four weeks of classes. The team gained tremendous expertise in supporting these environments during spring semester, and they've done additional training and documentation. Members of IT served on committees led by Provost Sargent or members of his team to ensure that IT understood and could build support mechanisms valuable for your learning. In the coming days, you'll receive all the information you need—the support phone number, the email address, the hours for the help desk—so you can have it readily available as you study.

I want to echo our excitement about having you back. When you return to campus, we'll be ready. As I reported earlier, we're completing extensive work on Wi-Fi, a significant increase in internet speeds, distribution of printing across campus, extensive upgrades to our security in response to increasing threats during the pandemic, cleaning and preparing computer labs, support offered after hours in the residence halls, and an upgrade to the main help desk in the library.

As I've shared earlier, IT will now require specific operating systems on all your devices. Students average just under four devices, such as your desktop computer, your notebook, your smartphone and your tablet. All of these will require a specific operating system or higher. You'll receive the version numbers soon. If you have any questions about how to update, or if you get here and want assistance with updating, the IT department will help you.

I'd like to turn it over to the chief financial officer, Doug Jones.

I'd like to share with you a little bit about adjustments to tuition, room and board costs. We will not make any adjustments to tuition, but we will make adjustments to room and board. We've opted to give credits for each week the college is unable to repopulate the campus. The repopulation date of September 28 is four weeks past the intended start date of August 31. In

about a week, you'll see on your student bill the full semester's charge and then you'll see four weeks of credit applied. You'll be able to track that fairly easily and see that the credit has been applied to your account.

We'll also make some adjustment to financial aid, which is awarded based on the total cost of attending Westmont. The reduction of room and board charges will result in some reduction in financial aid to students, essentially based on a student's cost after gift aid. In rare cases, a few students may see a one-to-one reduction in both financial aid and their room and board costs. No one will pay more than they're intending to pay right now. Nearly everyone will see a lower cost for the fall semester once all these adjustments have been made on your student account. The financial aid office and the student accounts office will manually process these adjustments, and we intend to have them done and on your bill by end of day Tuesday, August 18. Please log in then and look at your adjusted bill. If you have questions, particularly regarding any adjustments to financial aid, please reach out to financialaid@westmont.edu.

I've been asked when the first payment is required. Traditionally we ask for that first payment on August 15 (this Friday), but the revised bill won't be available until next Tuesday, so we're going to bump that first date back two weeks to August 28. By August 28, we'd like to have either payment in full for the entire semester or the first payment in the payment plan, which is one-third of the semester's balance. If you have any questions when you look at your new bill, please contact the student accounts office or the financial aid office, and we'll work with you.

How will students receive textbooks now that we're moving to remote instruction for at least the first four weeks? They'll be mailed to you. Students will receive an email August 12 from the college store and the textbook center with a lot of detail, so please watch for that. If you've ordered your textbooks from the college store, that's fantastic. If you haven't yet ordered your books from the college store, please do so very soon. We're going to need a little extra time to get all those books boxed up and shipped to you so you have them for the start of classes August 31. Students who are relatively local and want to pick up their books can do so starting as early as next week. Please see the email for more details about ordering and picking up books.

I'll turn it back to Dr. Beebe.

We've had a few questions come in, and the first pertains to Westmont Downtown. Jason, do you want to give us clarity about the county's guidelines?

I've been talking to the directors of Westmont Downtown relative to what we expect to hear from the county. There's a great chance we'll be able to start more on time with face-to-face instruction, particularly if they can have their classes outside. It's such a small program with so few students that I anticipate that we'll be able to run it relatively normally, particularly if they're willing to meet outside and have class outside. Nothing is official until we get updated guidance from the county, but that's the way it looks right now.

Jason, thank you. A question also came in about science labs. As soon as we're able to get clarity from the county, we'll know exactly how to do science labs. In this unique learning environment, you have to be in close proximity. You're violating the six-foot rule, and so there will be some extraordinary stipulations. We'll have to wait until we get clarity on that.

Edee, do you have a question?

A question came in about regular housing in OV since we're housing international students there and students with medical or safety needs. The regular housing for OV is not available until we repopulate because students with special circumstances like our international students are using those spaces. If you have a particular question about your housing assignment anywhere on campus or especially in OV, please contact housing@westmont.edu.

Mark? You have a question?

Several questions have come in about athletics. The athletic department is preparing a list of frequently asked questions and will publish that shortly. Of course, coaches will be in touch with their athletes as well as we determine what might be possible for the fall semester. Our ability to have any form of athletic competition will depend on permission from the county, but you'll hear directly from your coaches, and we'll provide an FAQ for our athletes and parents.

Any other frequently asked questions will be posted to the website, and we encourage you to check it often as we add to it each day. We're keeping it updated.

I want to make a few concluding remarks. First, it's an incredible privilege to be at Westmont. I absolutely love getting to work here, to serve here, to provide leadership for the college. The members of my executive team feel the exact same way. I want to assure you that we've made enormous efforts throughout the summer to prepare the campus for your return. We will not do it in any way that's unsafe. We'll comply with everything the governor expects; we'll comply with everything the county health officer requires. I'm often struck by the privilege we have of living in such an incredibly beautiful place. But it's also the size; the college is the right size, the community is the right size. When we talk about the county public health office, these are people we know who have been on campus. We work together with a great deal of mutual respect. We've had enough challenges throughout the 14 years I've been here that we've gotten to know the county officials very well. It's a huge benefit that they know us and respect us. The mutual respect carries over into emergencies, including this one. We're going to go at a pace they allow. They've been gracious about sending us the signal that we'll be able to repopulate, and we'll hold that very dearly. We want to do everything to comply with that.

When we do repopulate, I've got to reiterate: This is going to be an unusual season of personal discipline, and each of us is going to have to live up to the expectations placed on us as a community. It's well known that one of the great attractions for me in coming to Westmont was the Community Life Statement. I love the way it embodies the purpose and mission of our college. I think it's a key document—even at a time like this it reminds us of our purpose as an academic institution, as individuals who embody an academic institution. As we look at both the academic and co-curricular activities, how can we comport ourselves as we engage this unusual educational mission and do it in a way that contributes to the legacy of Westmont and prepares us to improve society? I've always thought of Westmonters as individuals not only called to prepare to serve in every sphere of society, but as responsible to prepare to lead in every sphere of society. I believe that more now than ever.

I pray that tonight as you receive this news you'll begin to anticipate the opening of school on August 31 and, a few short weeks later, the opportunity to repopulate campus and feel the joy and energy that comes whenever we're together.

I'd like to close our time in prayer. Please join me. Gracious Lord and God, we give you thanks for the work of Westmont and the joy and privilege we have in serving you through this work. Be with our students as they prepare for a new year. Thank you for their resilience. Thank you for their grit. Thank you for their capacity to adjust. We pray that as we anticipate a new year, it will be one with unexpected blessings in the midst of great challenge. Be with our families who carry both an anticipation and a concern. Each one of us knows that our son or daughter, our nieces and nephews, are safe and protected and that they can have the kind of atmosphere that allows them to grow in all the ways the educational mission of Westmont makes possible. Be with the entire constituency that serves the purposes of the college: our dear faculty and the work they do, the proximity with which they do it, the care and mentoring they deploy to see a student's gift come to life and to see it nurtured and then deployed. And the staff that serve faithfully, often in the shadows. The many people who have worked around the clock this summer to prepare our campus. The administrators who work tirelessly on our behalf. And then for our donors, our community, our parents, our alums—there are so many people who carry a keen interest in the work of the college. Thank you for the opportunity and privilege we have to serve you in this way. Thank you for Westmont. Thank you for this time. In Christ I pray, amen.

Enjoy your evening. May God be with you.