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University of Lethbridge extending holiday break in effort to enhance campus well-being

The University of Lethbridge is extending its holiday break and pushing back the start of Spring 2021 semester classes in an effort to address student mental health concerns and enhance public health and safety following the holiday season.

The start of Spring 2021 semester classes has been pushed to Saturday, January 9, 2021, from its previous scheduled start of January 6, 2021. The move, while giving students much-needed additional time with family and friends over the holiday period, will extend the semester by just one day and still satisfy all class contact hours.

“We really felt this was a necessary adjustment we could make to help our students,” says U of L President and Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Mike Mahon. “Like many of us, some of our students have experienced considerable stress as they work toward their academic goals throughout the pandemic. This move gives them a little extra time to decompress over the break, to spend some safe, quality time with their support systems and get a leg up heading into the spring semester.”

While some administrative in-semester dates and deadlines have been shifted to accommodate the adjustment, many will remain unchanged, such as reading week (February 13-19, 2021) and Easter break (April 2-5, 2021). The start of the final exam period will be moved one day later and commence on April 16, 2021 and conclude on April 23, 2021 (unchanged). Spring convocation will run as scheduled, June 3-4, 2021.

“We succeed when our students succeed and we see this as an opportunity to enhance their opportunity for success in the spring and beyond,” adds Mahon. “All the while, we are very aware that as students go home, they may be in contact with others throughout the holiday season, including New Year’s Eve. With more in-person classes being offered in the spring, this proposal allows for more time to elapse between New Year’s and the start of in-person classes to reduce the risk of transmission among faculty and students on campus. The safety of our campus community and southern Alberta as a whole is still foremost in our decision-making.”

The University is also implementing measures to support a healthy workplace for its employees. Some of these are targeted to the time around Christmas with further initiatives being implemented as employees return to work on January 4, 2021. These measures have been directly communicated to the campus community.

“The health of our entire community is paramount and we will continue to strive to provide the support our students, faculty and staff need and deserve,” says Mahon.

To view online: <https://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/university-lethbridge-extending-holiday-break-effort-enhance-campus-well-being>

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