

Fall Semester Update

Dear Students,

The confluence of a global health pandemic and an economic recession has created a situation like no other in Sheridan's 50+ year history. Every student and employee has been personally impacted and has had to make changes to familiar ways of learning, studying, working, and teaching. We understand your stress because we feel it too.

Our pandemic response actions continue to be grounded in our efforts to balance five imperatives: to protect everyone's physical health and wellbeing; to maintain the integrity of our programs and ensure students' learning outcomes are met; to navigate our pandemic response together, as a community; to safeguard the long-term economic sustainability of Sheridan; and, to remain focused on achieving the priorities and enablers outlined in our Strategic Plan.

Below, we've provided more information regarding topics that have surfaced on social media and at various virtual events like our Faculty Days and Town Hall forums.

The myth that Sheridan is profiting.

The pandemic has generated great strain at Sheridan, just as it has done at many other post-secondary institutions. While [50](#) post-secondary institutions in the US and another 13 in the UK are expected to declare bankruptcy and permanently close due to the economic and enrolment recession brought on by pandemic, years of effective financial management at Sheridan has resulted in a rainy day reserve. Reinvesting that money will sustain us through this crisis. As a registered not-for-profit, Sheridan never aims to profit. To be in compliance with legislation, we strive to run a balanced budget each year, in which revenue and costs are equalized.

As a direct consequence of the pandemic, Sheridan is forecasting a 20% reduction in domestic enrolment and a 40% reduction in international enrolment. This translates to a financial loss of over \$80 million – funds that we have had to find through cost avoidance, revenue generation or the use of reserves. Regrettably, we have already made the difficult but necessary decision to lay off some employees and cut operating expenses by 28%.

Calls for a tuition fee reduction

Given the anticipated \$80M deficit we are facing, there are no additional discretionary dollars available to further offset costs to students. In April -- prior to the launch of the federal Canada Emergency Response (CERB) -- we disbursed \$2M in emergency financial aid to domestic and international students. The SSU and Student Affairs also helped by providing grocery cards to students facing food insecurity.

Domestic tuition remains frozen at last year's rate, which was lowered by 10% from the year prior. As detailed in previous communications, we have cut ancillary and program fees. Further, Sheridan will continue to advocate for students to secure relief funding where possible. For example, we secured \$742K in funding for summer employment for ~600 students.

Additional support for international students

International students -- like their domestic counterparts -- were eligible for the Sheridan emergency relief bursary this April and the grocery card program. Our student affairs team has conducted outreach to all international students -- with thousands of contacts made via email, phone, live chats and webinars. We've also offered remote counselling via video conferencing and phone 24/7.

Sheridan continues to work with other colleges and universities to lobby the federal government to ensure that international students don't lose their study visas or the ability to work in Canada post graduation -- even if their studies this Fall occur through remote delivery.

Access to student services, supports and amenities

While students and employees may not be physically present on campus, all of our existing student supports have been adapted for remote delivery. Students have full access to academic advisors, financial aid, health centres and counselling, library services and various help centres. All tutoring services have moved online, including virtual exam crams. Other workshops for APA citation, online academic skills and research workshops will also be fully accessible. Numerous co-op/internship workshops have been restructured for remote delivery, including paid placements. A list of remote student services can be found [here](#). Our Virtual Internship program is detailed [here](#). Accessing remote counseling can be done [here](#).

Accessibility and policies regarding program delivery and deadlines

Sheridan has policies in place to ensure that all students are positioned to succeed. We are developing "learning differently with technology" and "virtual synchronous learning skills" workshops and will provide assistive software where possible. We are working with faculty and students to support testing accommodations online. Other work is underway to plan for recording audio and capturing important visuals from class as well as converting course materials into different modalities for use in different environments.

Our faculty are the best in the business. They're currently working through plans for their courses -- whether asynchronous, synchronous or blended. Students who experience difficulty -- due to illness, internet connectivity, or other challenges -- should continue to communicate these issues to their professor, who has the authority to reset deadlines if/as appropriate.

Program substance and quality

Without question, remote or hybrid learning changes the student experience. Everyone at Sheridan, however, is committed to providing the same high-quality programming we're known for this Fall. We appreciate that students are hungry for specific details about how their courses or assignments will be restructured. This work is currently in progress; rest assured you'll continue to hear from us on a regular basis.

Sheridan has made significant investments in new educational technology software to support remote delivery for faculty and students alike. These include, but are not limited to, a new remote online exam proctoring tool; a course collaboration tool that will support synchronous (at the same time) and asynchronous (at different times) lecturing through recording capabilities and video assignments; and, a video capture platform used to record high quality interactive lectures and demonstrations. Students will be able to approach content using multiple means in ways suited to their personal learning style. Where virtual lectures are pre-recorded, students can revisit the content or watch according to their pace and comfort.

Sheridan has also mobilized 25 staff from its Centre for Teaching and Learning to support professors in making the switch to remote deployment of courses and curricula this Fall. The Digital and Visualization team is also supporting the creation of custom digital and multimedia applications that will enhance the online teaching and learning experience.

Finally, we know that peer interaction is an integral part of the learning experience. This will be safeguarded through various group projects, group discussions and experiential learning opportunities. Courses offered remotely will still allow professors to break opportunities into smaller groups, in real time, and allow opportunities for collaboration and interaction.

We know that pursuing a post-secondary program is a substantial commitment and that the Fall semester is not what you envisioned. It's not what anyone at Sheridan expected either. Through this and previous emails and forums, we've worked hard to be transparent about the many ways that we will be supporting learners across Sheridan this Fall. We remain fully invested in delivering the high-quality programming and credentials that have set Sheridan apart for over 50 years.