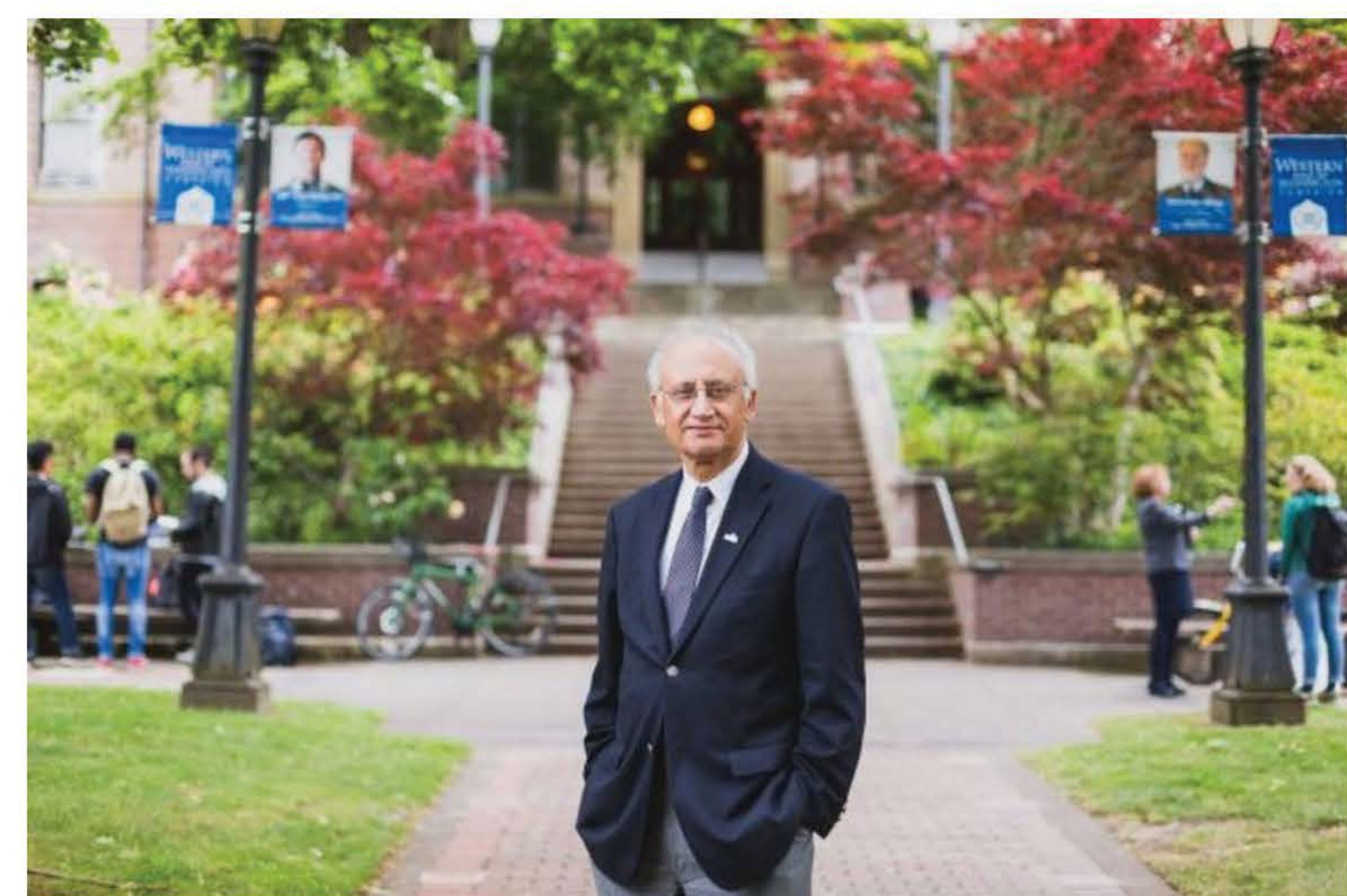


Seventeen takeaways from Western's forum on fall 2021

What students need to know for a return to campus

By Emily Bishop

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President Randhawa hosted a live Q&A with Western students May 20. In fall 2021, Randhawa will welcome back students to Western's campus. // Photo courtesy of Western's Director of University Communications Paul Cocke.

On May 20, Western President Sabah Randhawa held a Q&A where he addressed questions about Western Washington University's plans for fall quarter. He was joined by Provost Brent Carbajal and vice president for enrollment and student services Melynda Huskey.

Here are the main takeaways from that meeting.

1. WILL CAMPUS BE OPEN FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR?

Yes. Because of the vaccine requirement, campus is planning to reopen in the fall with no physical distancing requirements in classrooms and workplaces. Randhawa said approximately two-thirds of undergraduate classes will be in person for fall 2021. For 100 and 200 level courses, about 75-80% of classes will be in person.

"Barring a catastrophe I expect to be back 100% in person for winter and spring quarters," Randhawa said.

2. WILL CLASSES STILL BE AVAILABLE TO TAKE ONLINE?

Yes. A significant number of classes will still be available to take online for fall quarter. Decisions on which classes will be available online have yet to be announced.

3. WHAT IF I'M UNABLE TO ATTEND IN-PERSON THIS FALL?

Western will be offering significantly more classes face to face but will still try to accommodate student needs, Carbajal said.

"That move to face to face instruction does require us to pay attention to how we might be able to accommodate students who cannot attend in-person for one reason or another," he said.

There will be several approaches for accommodating students remotely, but it will depend on the type of class and how many students are asking for accommodation. That might involve fully remote sections of a class or a hybrid approach.

4. WILL STUDENTS BE TOLD IF THEIR TEACHERS AND CLASSMATES ARE VACCINATED OR NOT?

No. Vaccination status falls under private health information. Vaccinations are required for those wishing to return to campus, but if a student or faculty is exempted from vaccination for religious, medical or personal reasons, that information will not be made public. Huskey recommended that instructors not ask students about vaccination status. Students will be able to seek exemptions for medical, religious or personal reasons, the same reasons students are exempt from the measles vaccination.

5. WHO IS IN CHARGE OF EXEMPTIONS FOR VACCINES?

Accommodations for students due to disability or other medical reasons will be handled by the Disability Access Center. Huskey said there are protocols in place to protect student privacy. Vaccine accommodations not related to disability will be handled through the Office of Student Life.

6. I'M WORRIED ABOUT COMMITTING TO A YEAR-LONG LEASE, DO I NEED TO FIND HOUSING IN BELLINGHAM?

Probably. Even if fall isn't 100% in-person, winter and spring likely will be. Here's what Huskey said:

"We are doing our best to advise students that we will be moving towards face-to-face in winter and spring so that they can plan ahead and know that they'll need to be in Bellingham further along in the year."

Randhawa said that, barring catastrophe, he expects winter and spring quarters to be 100% in-person.

7. WHAT PRECAUTIONS IS THE UNIVERSITY TAKING IN ADDITION TO REQUIRING VACCINATIONS?

Carbon dioxide sensors have been installed throughout campus to monitor the airflow in buildings. Air filters have also been installed on recirculated air systems. Windows are also recommended to be left open. All classrooms that will be in use in fall quarter have adequate airflow according to current research and guidance, Carbajal said.

8. DOES THIS AFFECT SUMMER COURSES?

No. Summer courses will continue to be remote.

9. WHEN CAN I REGISTER FOR FALL QUARTER?

Carbajal said registration will open on June 9. Classfinder will update with the courses for the 2021-22 school year on June 2.

10. WILL MASKS BE REQUIRED?

Yes. Currently, the university will continue to require masks in all campus facilities. The Centers for Disease Control has recently announced that fully vaccinated people can go without masks outside and in some indoor settings. However, the university is awaiting further guidance before doing anything to relax the mask mandate.

As of now, masks are still required and will continue to be required. But this could change.

11. WILL COVID-19 TESTING STILL BE AVAILABLE ON CAMPUS?

Yes, the university is planning to continue offering COVID-19 tests.

12. CAN I GET VACCINATED ON CAMPUS?

Yes. The university has already hosted two vaccination clinics and plans to continue to do so. Western has said that if students are unable to get vaccinated before fall quarter, the university will provide vaccines for them when they arrive on campus.

13. WILL ON-CAMPUS HOUSING BE AVAILABLE?

Yes. Housing will return to what it was before COVID-19 and will offer double and triple rooms in the fall. Huskey said Western expects about 3000 students in university residences — more than half the number that lived on campus this year. According to Western Today, Western's campus had 4,100 residents in fall 2019.

14. WILL DINING SERVICES BE OPEN IN FALL?

Yes, dining services will be open in fall. There are plans to re-open the Atrium, Miller Market and Zoe's Bagels. They will reopen as soon as it is safe to do so.

15. WILL THIS AFFECT SPRING GRADUATION?

Spring 2021 commencement will still be virtual.

16. WILL THIS AFFECT WELCOME WEEK?

Welcome Week is currently planned to be an outdoor event. The new student convocation ceremony and other events associated with the start of fall quarter are currently planned to happen outside while taking all necessary precautions in order to have students gather in person.

17. IS ALL OF THIS 100% SET IN STONE?

No. "To state the obvious, our external environment continues to remain uncertain, and somewhat difficult to predict and nail down," Randhawa said.

Randhawa said Western doesn't expect to make any dramatic changes to the plan, but the university is continuing to monitor the spread of new variants and CDC guidance.

"COVID[-19] has taught us many things, one of which is the need to be flexible," Randhawa said.

Reporting contributed by [Caroline Brooks](#) and [Nate Sanford](#)