

General description of the Fall 2021 model designed to increase face-to-face (F2F) offerings

We approved a model where classes will be held synchronously in-person and remotely in order to allow for as much flexibility as possible for both students and faculty. We are referring to this model as a “partitioned classroom” because students will be voluntarily divided into the two separate “rooms” (in-person and Zoom). This model offers MCC a safe way to expand our F2F offerings; faculty will be equipped with the technology to teach both in-person and remotely and additional supports will be provided to help manage the remote portion of the class. Specifically:

From a safety standpoint, we are planning to follow the current COVID-19 social distancing and site cleanliness requirements, to be adjusted as Public Health or SUNY requirements change. This means each room will be approved for the current 6-foot social distancing requirement, students will clean their desk/lab space, etc. upon entry and exit from the class, and we will leave classrooms vacant for one class period to allow the room to ventilate and to reduce student bunching in doorways. Additionally, New York State’s vaccine eligibility list includes all educators teaching in-person so every faculty member scheduled to teach in the fall semester can be vaccinated, if they so desire.

From an instructional standpoint, we will continue to provide both preparatory and real-time technology support for the classrooms. Classroom technology will include the current equipment (pc, projector, document camera, and speakers) plus a pan/tilt/zoom camera and wireless microphones for remote viewing/recording, and a large flat-screen monitor in the back of the classroom so the instructor can see and interact with the remote students. We are hoping to enhance the audio capabilities in the classrooms to improve coverage for student discussions. Real-time classroom support will be available by calling the Learning Resources team at 292-2828. Additionally, we plan to offer classroom technology training over the summer to demonstrate use of the new technology; these sessions will be recorded and uploaded for greater flexibility for faculty.

From a faculty support standpoint, we will pilot having supplemental instruction (SI) in the “partitioned” classrooms. The SI Leader will push into the class’ Circle-In app and will also attend the remote portion of the course. During the classes, SI Leaders will assist faculty and students in navigating the remote portion of the course, and in the Circle-In app, SI Leaders will hold learning sessions with the students. The faculty are encouraged to connect with SI Leaders, but it is not required.

Questions about partitioned classes, HyFlex, and other potential modalities

1. Where are documented descriptions of these modes and their requirements and expectations? It is difficult to ask informed questions without these documented descriptions.

Answer: Please see the description of the model above. The communication plan for sharing this out is addressed in a later question.

2. What are our plans, if we are still staying mostly remote, to compete with other local colleges that are returning to campus, (i.e. Brockport has plans to push all 100 and 200 level classes back to F2F), especially with our enrollment issues, and a significant number of students that have chosen not to attend while we have remote classes? Similar question: SUNY Alfred is back on campus, and Brockport has started offering on-campus tours. Are we at MCC the exception?

Answer: With the “partitioned classroom,” we have developed a model that we believe offers a way for us to expand our in-person offerings in a safe way. This method can also be modified to allow for greater in-person participation if circumstances with the virus improve. Some schools are advertising that they plan to come back to campus at full capacity, however, in conversations with the chief academic officers from these schools, all acknowledge that they will need to alter this plan to reflect social distancing requirements that will likely still be in place for the fall semester. MCC faculty leadership have requested that, as much as possible, we pick a strategy and stay with it instead of starting with one and switching to another option, especially if we are switching over the summer when most faculty are not on contract. We also feel that luring students back by stating we are going to be offering most of our classes in-person is disingenuous when we know that is not likely a practical option.

3. Why are we offering so many options? Why can't we offer fully online or remote and that's it? (With the understanding that some classes have to have the lab/hands on component). What's the rationale for offering all of these different options when those of us who teach them know they just cause confusion?

Answer: We received requests from various stakeholders, including students, faculty, and Enrollment Services, for more F2F opportunities in the fall. Our survey also revealed a significant desire to increase F2F offerings to some degree. The partitioned model seems the best way to do so safely while respecting the wishes of faculty members and students who are reluctant to return to campus. Ultimately, this is meant to be a resilient model—the simplest to modify in the event of changing conditions.

4. There were a number of requests for different teaching options, including
 - a. stating we are coming back F2F and then adjust as needed (see answer above)
 - b. offering fully F2F classes where the instructor records the lecture and posts it in Blackboard for student who might not be able to attend
 - c. hold full sections in the large lecture halls
 - d. offer hybrid courses where the faculty member will teach half of the class one day and the other half the next meeting time (no live streaming)
 - e. expand on traditional hybrid courses where the whole class will meet in a room large enough to accommodate social distancing requirements

Answer: Faculty, staff, and students have consistently asked that we avoid too many options, as this can be confusing and actually keep students from registering. We absolutely understand and appreciate the ideas brought forward by faculty who wish to expand our F2F options, however, we are not able to offer a multitude of choices for students and feel the partitioned class is a compromise to bringing students back safely.

5. What benefit does the “partition model” offer if it is basically the HyFlex but without flexibility? Will students be allowed to switch groups from F2F to remote? For example, if a student tests positive for COVID in the F2F group will they be allowed to switch to the remote class?

Answer: Positioning the partitioned model as “basically the HyFlex but without flexibility” is not accurate. The HyFlex model also includes a robust asynchronous choice in addition to the F2F and

synchronous facets of the course. The partitioned class is a synchronous class offered in-person and remotely without the addition of a fully developed online option.

6. Please confirm or deny the rumor that all the HyFlex courses will be held at the DCC.

Answer: This is not accurate. While there is no rule against holding F2F courses at DCC, the majority will be held at Brighton and ATC. Moreover, it is important to draw distinctions between the partitioned model and HyFlex.

7. It sounds like the new partitioned class is just like HyFlex. Please explain the difference.

Answer: No—this is not the HyFlex model. HyFlex is designed to allow students the option to choose which modality they want to attend with each session (in-person, online, or synchronously remote); all HyFlex courses are required to have a complete asynchronous component. Please see above for a complete description of the partitioned model.

8. What do we mean by "remote option" if all students fit the room? Again, live broadcast or recorded? Is attendance required?

Answer: For the partitioned classroom, students will be either F2F or remote in a synchronous fashion. Students will still be dealing with the impact of the pandemic this fall and may not be in a position—because they are ill or they are taking care of an ill family member, or because they are facing childcare, transportation, or employment issues exacerbated by the pandemic—to attend every class session. For this reason, in partitioned classes, instructors may choose to record the lecture to allow students who are unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances to access the lecture. However, these are synchronous classes so there is no additional online requirements for students who do not participate during the class time.

Attendance in all MCC classes is required and should be recorded in Starfish as per our policy.

9. Why not simply adjust class sizes down to what is safe for social distancing and offer them as face-to-face. This is simple, easy, and clearly what students will understand. All other models require a tremendous amount of additional work for faculty. Has that been negotiated?

Answer: It is not fiscally responsible to run classes capped at 14 or 15 as most classes would need to be in order to accommodate for social distancing.

10. If a partitioned course has 2 sections. would it be better to have 1 section totally remote.... then have the other section have the F2F students ... have half students attend on 1 day and the other half of the students on a 2nd day.

Answer: Please see above re: suggested alternative course options.

Logistical questions for the partitioned classrooms

11. How long do we have to consider the synchronous F2F/Remote option or other options that might be available such as hybrid courses? We thought the deadline was last week.

Answer: The deadlines have shifted as we have learned more (particularly about our capacity for technological enhancements and in-class support) and, in turn, received more input from the faculty. We would like to have all requests submitted to the deans by this Wednesday, March 10th.

12. How do we put in a request for a partitioned course?

Answer: Please put the request in the workflow comments section and R&R will make the changes; the rooms will be assigned later this semester.

13. Can faculty teach at their “home” campus?

Answer: If there is a desire to hold classes at the Downtown Campus, we currently plan to offer classes there. In addition to the Brighton Campus, we are currently offering classes at both ATC and the PSTF.

14. Will there be any testing downtown on a smaller scale than Brighton?

Answer: If the pooled testing requirements continue through the fall semester, we will consider opening up testing for Downtown campus students and faculty.

15. Do you have to stay close to the camera/mic when teaching in the partition model so that the remote students get the same benefit? How about writing on white boards, etc.?

Answer: Faculty will have a wearable mic and the pan/tilt/zoom camera can capture the whole room, front of room, or any specific area the faculty would need so faculty will be able to conduct themselves in the same way as they would in a normal F2F class.

16. What are the technical details for partition model? Would there be multiple CRNs for each partition?

Answer: The partitioned model is cross-listed in banner, so there will be two CRNs - one for the F2F part and one for the synchronous remote part.

17. Will faculty teaching on campus have priority with getting a vaccine if they want it?

Answer: Face-to-face faculty are already a priority group for vaccination. We anticipate that any educator—especially those teaching F2F—can be vaccinated well before the fall semester, if they wish. Please visit: <https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/> for more information.

Communication and classroom support

18. If we are going to move ahead with offering all of these different options how are we going to do a better job at communicating what they mean to students before they register, after they register, and before the semester starts? What we share with them now doesn't work.

Answer: In general, it is challenging to ensure that students access and understand changes to the master schedule. For the partitioned classes, we plan to auto-generate emails to students as they register for one-half of the partitioned class explaining what it will look like. We are exploring how students might be alerted to the partitioned class before they register possibly by using the prerequisite pop-up so students would know how the class will be delivered before they actual register. We will also work with Marketing to update the “how will courses be delivered” for the fall semester. This includes written descriptions, visual descriptions with icons of classrooms and virtual learning, and a video starring our students that was posted on our website and shared on other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

19. That modality video [on the MCC webpage] is great but it does not include "partitioned" classes ... and I think it's missing HyFlex.

Answer: Please see above for a discussion of our plans to communicate the partitioned class model to students. Regarding HyFlex, because we offered only 3 credit-bearing HyFlex courses this semester, we decided not to include the description on the website to help cut down on the confusion of multiple offerings. Each student enrolled in one of these HyFlex sections was sent an email that fully described the HyFlex course modality and the instructors for the HyFlex courses reached out to the students prior to the first day of class. We can include HyFlex in the course modalities description and videos in the future along with a description of the partitioned F2F/remote synchronous classes.

20. What assumptions are we making about what SUNY guidelines will be for the use of campuses in August? What are the bases for these assumptions? To put it another way, has SUNY committed to what guidelines will be in place in August? If not, what are we basing our guesses on?

Answer: We do not know what SUNY will require of its 64 campuses for the fall 2021 semester so we are basing our partitioned and other F2F offerings on the current guidelines and a conservative approach to expanding our F2F offerings. The partitioned model will allow for social distancing and we will schedule classes so that the classrooms will remain empty every other class session to allow for air exchange and to avoid bottlenecking in the classroom doorway. We know that SUNY can require us to change our plans with little notice and we feel the partitioned classroom offers us a great deal of flexibility in order to make changes as seamlessly as possible.

21. We've heard there will be support in the F2F/Remote courses. If this is true, what will this look like?

Answer: We will be offering Supplemental Instruction (SI) in the fall partitioned classes. SI is a type of learning assistance that has targeted highly-enrolled, low success rate courses, but that we will be expanding to provide support in the partitioned classes. SI Leaders are paid, trained, peers who have typically taken and excelled in the course for which they will provide assistance. In the traditional SI model, the SI Leader attends the course and then holds recitation sessions during the week with the students, but no new material is presented. During these out-of-class sessions, the leader and students focus on learning-to-learn techniques. There is usually a connection between the faculty and SI Leader to share in the planning of the recitation sessions.

During the spring semester, we are piloting pushing SI Leaders into the Circle-In application. We began the semester with 15 sections and will increase this to 203 sections within the next few days. At the end of the semester, we will see how effective this effort was. There has been no expectation that the faculty member and SI Leader connect for planning purposes in the Circle-In app, but faculty are certainly free to do so.

To provide additional support for faculty and students, for fall 2021, we will pilot having SI Leaders in the "partitioned" classrooms. In the fall, the SI Leader will push into the class' Circle-In app and will attend the remote portion of the course. During the classes, SI Leaders can assist faculty and students in navigating the remote portion of the course, and in the Circle-In app, they will hold learning sessions with the students. The faculty are encouraged to connect with SI Leaders, but it is not required.

Please see the general description of the partitioned classroom for the technical enhancements and supports for the new learning environment.

22. On the master schedule, can "TBA" under location be used to say "on-campus" if that is the intent for that course (realizing that perhaps we do not know the on-campus location at this time)? The campus says "BC" but having the on-campus piece clarified under location would be helpful. (For

the spring, there was a course listed as "BC" for campus and TBA for location...it ended up that it was a zoom class.)

Answer: We will not be able to update the location until after we've processed requests for in-person instruction. We learned last summer that putting placeholders such as the suggested "on-campus" for TBA is difficult because the master schedule appears in many places (two separate locations on the main MCC website, and also in Degree works and schedule planner); making and then undoing these changes is nearly impossible. After we have a firm handle on the number of sections we will be offering in-person, we will assign rooms based on the current COVID capacity limits for social distancing. Banner defaults to "TBA" for all blank fields so faculty and students will see this until the rooms are assigned.

23. Over the years, I have taught over 200 online classes at a half dozen institutions. Most had 20 students or fewer. Only a few had as many as 30. Yet at MCC, my online classes have 38 to 43 students and could have more if the 15% rule is implemented. Compared to a face-to-face class, it is much more time consuming to properly teach and support this number of students online. Has any consideration been given to decreasing online class sizes?

Answer: Online class size is currently part of the FA contract.

24. Will MCC be making recommendations to faculty and students about suggested technologies? Especially multiple screens.

Answer: President Douglas has convened a cross-divisional group to make recommendations about student minimum technology requirements. We expect a formal recommendation before the end of the Spring semester.