The COVID-19 outbreak changed many things, but not Black Hawk College's commitment to the community and student success. Remote learning began in March, and most learning will remain online for Fall 2020. A few BHC leaders answered some questions on the decision-making process and adjusting to changes.

BHC President Tim Wynes

What were the main factors for deciding how to proceed with Fall 2020?

The main factors are safety and health for faculty, staff and students, balanced with the flexibility to deliver the college experience and activities during the school year. We're evaluating the situation regularly and following the state's Restore Illinois plan. For both employees and students, we want to make sure we do everything we can to minimize the risk of the virus.

What do you want the community and students to know about changes at Black Hawk College?

We take the virus seriously. Especially with recent developments in other states, we realize how fast things can change. In terms of the virus' impact on the community, we will do as much as we can at Black Hawk College with sanitization processes and guidelines. Every person also has a responsibility to help minimize the risk of transmission: wear a mask, wash your hands regularly and practice social distancing to help keep the community safe. We're focused on providing an optimal educational and employment experience.

Vice President for Instruction Dr. Amy Maxeiner

What was the process of moving classes online in March like, and what did it take to help faculty make it possible?

The decision to move to remote learning in March was made prior to Gov. Pritzker's shelter-in-place order. At the time, the health and safety of our students and faculty were in the forefront of our minds. The faculty stepped up to the challenge of transitioning all of the courses to remote learning with grace and dedication. Faculty members worked collaboratively with each other, academic resources and administration to implement the best possible learning environments while taking into account that for many students this was a new learning experience. Faculty members stepped in to learn Zoom and Canvas conferencing to simulate the face-to-face experiences of the classroom when possible. From my perspective, we made the decision and as faculty stepped up to the challenges before us, we were able to provide the resources to support their creativity.

How has moving most classroom activity online impacted students, and what kind of education are they receiving?

I wish I could say that the transition to remote learning was a smooth transition for all students. The digital divide became much more evident once the transition took place. Students struggled with everything from connecting to the internet to having the bandwidth they needed to complete their coursework. The transition happened for all education, not

just Black Hawk College. Many students struggled to be students themselves and teachers for their children. Work schedules were disrupted for many people as well, not allowing students to attend the virtual class as they had before. Other students were able to complete the courses with few barriers. Overall, students responded positively to the educational experiences and support from faculty and staff following the transition.

Our faculty provide an excellent education regardless of the delivery mode. There are many models of education. Our model is the faculty member introducing an idea to a student who interacts with that idea through experiences: reading, discussion, various practice activities. The student then is able to build their knowledge of the idea to then apply it in a different format. Our faculty create opportunities for students to build their knowledge and apply it. This happens regardless of the delivery method.

VICE PRESIDENT for Finance and Administration Steve Frommelt

What has it been like behind-the-scenes preparing for changes? Please share some of what it has entailed.

COVID-19 has made us become more flexible and agile. While college buildings were closed during Phase 1 and 2 of COVID, just like instructional learning, back office operations continued. Black Hawk College's IT infrastructure was put to the test and it shined! Work

continued in remote settings and on campus when necessary for student payments, campus services, purchasing, paying bills, developing the FY21 budget, maintaining our buildings and payroll. A huge thank you to everyone who got us through and continues to persevere.

What has the financial impact of COVID-19 been for the college, and do you see it impacting tuition?

COVID-19 has created financial havoc for everyone, business and personal. For FY21, in-district tuition will remain at $149 per credit hour for the fourth consecutive year. Black Hawk College's operating budget is comprised of three revenue sources: tuition (43%), property taxes (40%) and state support (17%).

Vice President for Student Services Dr. LaDrina Wilson

What has Black Hawk College done to help students learning remotely?

In order to support our students in an online environment, we've developed a free workshop, "How to Be a Successful Online Learner." This workshop provides tips, strategies and resources to aid all students in being successful, particularly those new to online learning.

What do you want to students to know about the Fall 2020 semester?

BHC Student Services staff are eager to help students during this transition. We are available for face-to-face and virtual support to all of our students. Additionally, there are a wide variety of resources available that include technology assistance programs, tutoring and much more. We are confident that the combination of support services and course offerings, both face-to-face and virtual, will ensure our students are successful this fall and beyond.

Black Hawk College continues to monitor the COVID-19 outbreak and provide updates, information and resources.

Share this:

- Click to share on Twitter (Opens in new window)
- Click to share on Facebook (Opens in new window)
- Click to email a link to a friend (Opens in new window)
- Click to print (Opens in new window)
- More