

Greetings! We hope everyone has had an enjoyable summer. Over the past few months, college faculty, staff and administrators have been completing tremendous work in preparation for the Fall 2020 term. Thank you for all of your efforts to support students, your colleagues and the College as a whole during these unprecedented times. The 2020/21 academic year will undoubtedly bring many new and continuing challenges in how we work and interact with each other. Flexibility, empathy, patience and a resolute commitment to ensuring everyone's health and safety will help us all have a successful year ahead.

Key Dates

Online Orientation for New On and Off-Shore International Students	Aug. 28 - Sept. 2
College Wide Town Hall	Friday, Sept. 4 12:00 - 1:30 pm
Student Orientation Live Sessions	Beginning Aug. 4 Tuesday, Sept. 8
First Day of Fall Classes	Wednesday, Sept. 9
Campus-Specific Safety Town Halls	Beginning Friday, Sept. 11

Safety Planning

The NIC [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#), as well as the provincial COVID-19 [Go Forward Guidelines](#) for the post-secondary education system have been completed and are available online.

The Health and Safety Team, with the support of the Oversight Safety Committee, has been working with deans, directors and department chairs to finalize safety plans for all programs, services and operational areas. These will be shared by supervisors and will allow teams to safely return to campus and better support the growing number of students beginning blended or digital classes this September.

New Mask Recommendation

Among the new safety procedures is a strong recommendation that non-medical masks be worn whenever safety plans require them and in all NIC indoor common areas, including building entryways, classrooms, labs, shops, washrooms, study areas, hallways and stairways.

This recommendation is consistent with what is being done across BC's post-secondary education sector, and supported by the BC Centre for Disease Control, the Provincial Health Officer, and the Public Health Agency of Canada to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in instances where physical distancing cannot be consistently maintained.

Return to On-Campus Work

To accommodate the College's many campuses, programs and divisions, there is no single fixed date when all employees are required to be back on campus. As each department's operational needs and circumstances are unique, supervisors have been asked to collaborate with employees to schedule a safe return date for their department.

The College understands some employees will require accommodation to continue working from home. [NIC Workplace Accommodation Guidelines](#) and forms are available on the Human Resources portal page.

Most of us, however, will be returning to campus to work under new safety guidelines. As a place of employment, NIC is designed for its employees to work together, on-campus. Each campus and centre is equipped with the furniture, technology and other resources needed to support employees in doing their work. In addition, the college's Information Technology (IT) department needs to prioritize on and off-campus supports for students and therefore, will be less able to assist employees working from home.

For additional details, see the [Information for all Employees](#) web page and plan to attend an upcoming campus-specific town hall, beginning on September 11.

Fall 2020 Enrolment

As of August 28, NIC had 2,074 domestic and international students (headcount) enrolled for the Fall 2020 term. This is down 14%, or 341 students, compared with last year. Domestic student enrolment is 10% (187 students) lower than last year and international student enrolment is 33% (154 students) lower than this time last year.

Virtually all program areas are seeing declines, with foundation trades, health programs and Continuing Education and Training credit programs the least affected.

We will continue to closely monitor enrolment as we approach the fall stable enrolment date of September 17.

NIC Finances & Budget 2020/21

NIC's Board of Governors approved a balanced operating budget for the 2020/21 fiscal year on April 23, 2020.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant ongoing budget pressures. By the end of June, our projected annual operating deficit was approximately \$2.9 million, due to lower revenues and unanticipated pandemic-related costs. As a result, we have informed the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST) that the College will incur a substantial operating budget shortfall this fiscal year.

The College's financial projections will be updated again in September and regularly throughout the year.

COVID-19 Recovery Plan

The COVID-19 pandemic will continue to significantly affect all areas of NIC, including college enrolment and finances, for potentially three to five years. As a result, it will be important for the College to develop a multi-year COVID-19 Recovery Plan to manage immediate impacts, and support our long-term sustainability and growth.

Our Recovery Plan will have as its foundation a set of assumptions and principles that will guide operations, decision-making and budget development. The Recovery Plan will inform the college community about the pandemic's impacts. It will provide the College with the foundation for government advocacy and will support our ongoing work with AEST staff to develop long-term solutions.

Across the globe, the pandemic and the required safety measures have put enormous pressure on students, creating stress and uncertainty in completing their studies. This has necessitated altering how NIC and post-secondary institutions around the globe deliver programs and services.

Our response to date has included transitioning programs and courses to digital and blended delivery, expanding digital resources for students and faculty, as well as providing technology and supports for employees to work from home, when required.

The COVID-19 Recovery Plan will further outline how the College will move through challenging circumstances including health and safety requirements and their operational impacts, international travel restrictions, an uncertain economy as well as changing government policy and funding.

The first draft is being developed and will be distributed for feedback in the coming weeks with the goal to have a final plan prepared by January 2021.

College Plan2025

In light of the many impacts and uncertainties COVID-19 has brought on the College, the community and its stakeholders, the Board of Governors has deferred final approval of the new College Strategic Plan2025 until early in the new calendar year.

In the meantime, the current version of [Plan2025](#) will be used as a working draft to guide the COVID-19 Recovery Plan and annual operational planning for 2020/21.

Student Housing Timeline

NIC's highly anticipated 217-bed [Comox Valley Housing Commons](#) continues to move through the approval process with the provincial government. When approved and completed, the Comox Valley Housing Commons will become home to 157 single students and 20 their families (60 beds).

Due to the pandemic's impact on provincial government operations and the AEST review

process, it has not been possible to receive a student housing funding approval decision by July 31 which would have enabled the project to be completed by September 2022. Therefore, the College has extended the proposed opening date, at AEST's request, to September 2023 and increased the student housing project contingency budget. This will account for any cost increases created by the new timeline or construction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Support for Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation and IT teams

The College wishes to acknowledge the Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation (CTLI) and IT teams for their support of the college community during the past six months.

The CTLI, a timely addition to the College last year, has offered a seemingly endless list of instructor workshops and sessions, while guiding faculty through the redesign of courses. It also expanded resources on teaching methods and technologies and developed two comprehensive [Learn Anywhere](#) and [Teach Anywhere](#) websites. With CTLI support, the College is shifting to digital instruction in an engaging, research-based way.

The IT team enabled us to work from home, when required, and quietly and steadfastly ensured all of our digital systems and servers could support staff, faculty and students as we worked through successful Winter, Spring and Summer terms.

Together, the two departments have provided vital and innovative resources to support students and employees during the pandemic. The College appreciates all of their continued work in the year ahead.