

What Will College Be Like in the Fall?

Administrators, professors, a union representative and students consider the new realities of life on campus in the midst of a pandemic.



By Emily Bazelon

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The Panelists

Carlos Aramayo is president of the Boston chapter (Local 26) of the union UNITE HERE, which represents 14,000 dining-hall staff members at colleges and universities and other workers in industries including hotels, gaming and food service.

Dr. Michael V. Drake is president of Ohio State University and a physician. He previously served as chancellor of the University of California, Irvine, and vice president for health affairs for the University of California system and was a professor of ophthalmology at the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine.

Mary Dana Hinton is the incoming president of Hollins University in Virginia and emerita president of the College of Saint Benedict in Minnesota. Both are liberal-arts schools.

Richard Levin, an economist, is a former president of Yale University and co-author of a report on gradually reopening higher-education campuses in Connecticut, written for Gov. Ned Lamont.

David Wall Rice is a psychology professor and associate provost at Morehouse College, where he also directs the school's Identity, Art and Democracy Lab.

Dr. Pardis Sabeti is a biology professor at Harvard University and a member of the Broad Institute and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Her work focuses on comprehensive approaches for detecting, containing and treating deadly infectious diseases. Her team was recently awarded funding from the TED Audacious Project to build Sentinel, a pandemic pre-emption and response system.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/magazine/covid-college-fall.html>

David Wall Rice: At Morehouse, as a historically black college for young men, there is a culture of tethering education to responsibility. Now we have to redefine that. From the president to faculty to staff to students, why are we here? What is our purpose?

We have a weekly community meeting called Crown Forum, based on chapel, where the campus comes together, and we bring in activists and academics to talk about pressing current issues. This spring, we took it online and used it to talk about what students were going through at home, what faculty were dealing with, how the original sin of slavery and the history of black people in this country relates to the greater impact Covid is having on our community.

If students come back to campus, we have to keep pursuing this thread of discussion so we can communicate the rules in a way that students say, OK, that makes sense, it's related to this greater purpose and responsibility. We can say, "You're going to die if you don't do this, or other people are going to die," but young folks often think that's not going to happen to them, or it's not going to happen tomorrow. Making the campus safe has to be about people coming together and coming through for each other.

Rice: On the other hand, why am I going to be convinced, as somebody who is in a vulnerable population, to trust that going back is the best thing for me to do? I'm not going back during this uncertain time just to get credentialed to go to graduate school or to get a job. Going back right now has to mean something.