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Loyalist College in Bancroft adapting to pandemic restrictions

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The Bancroft campus of Loyalist College is busy adapting its programs for the fall in light of restrictions caused by COVID-19. There will be a number of changes to the way courses are offered, including more focus on a combination of in-person and online learning. The Bancroft Times reached out for details on what to expect in the coming months at the Bancroft campus.

Will the Bancroft Campus be physically open this fall? Yes, the Loyalist College Bancroft campus continues to be open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as with the Belleville campus, all non-essential services have been suspended since March 16. We continue to follow the direction of Public Health officials and our Student Health Centre team to proactively protect the health, well-being and safety of our Loyalist College community.

What is happening with the long-running paramedic and PSW programs? Will they be online only or are adaptations being made so they can be in part in-person?Both programs will be offered through a blend of online delivery and in-person lab courses.This fall, to complement remote delivery, Loyalist College is offering some face-to-face instruction in 65 per cent of our full-time in-class programs. This is higher than the system average and is possible because of our smaller class sizes. eLab continues to be available to individuals interested in postsecondary education through a supported, learn-from-home model with ongoing start dates.

What plans are in the works for the Continuing Education Programs? Will they be moving to an electronic format? Will any be running in-person such as the Survival in the Bush?Continuing Education programs continue to be developed and offered on an ongoing basis for both online and future in-person delivery options.

Will the Community Employment Services staff continue to offer assistance remotely or are there any plans for moving at least some of the services back at the Hastings St. N. location this fall?Loyalist College Community Employment Services continues to serve clients and employers remotely through online services. We will be introducing a gradual reopening for on-site services by appointment only, beginning in the fall.Other Employment Ontario programming available to the community via distance and online delivery, includes: ? Literacy and Basic Skills programming for individuals seeking academic upgrading or development of essential skills; and? Youth Job Connection online group activities and support available to area youth seeking paid pre-employment training and job placements.

What are some of the biggest challenges Loyalist is facing in keeping its operations going during this crisis?Creating and ensuring a safe working and learning environment is of the utmost importance to Loyalist College. Our Pandemic Committee has been working closely with our Public Health partners as well as our own Student Health Centre medical personnel who are specialists in infectious disease and occupational health and safety, to protect students, employees and partners. Loyalist has taken very strict preventative safety measures, including:? Reconfiguring our facilities to ensure physical distancing;? Increasing security and introducing an app to track the arrival and exit of all individuals at limited entry and exit points;? Providing complimentary face masks to those on campus and requiring face masks to be worn;? Increasing the number of hand sanitizer stations located throughout campus and disinfectant wipes in classrooms and labs;? Posting hand washing guidelines in washrooms;? Stocking PPE and critical cleaning products such as wipes, replacement hand sanitizer solution, masks, gloves, and soap;? Redesigning our Student Success services online to easily connect students with mentors, resources and informational sessions;? Having employees work from home where possible to meet business needs remotely;? Closing public gathering spaces;? Offering student residents single occupancy rooms only within units of students in the same programs, where possible;? Providing detailed training documentation on the processes and protocols of returning to campus;? Introducing a COVID-19 testing facility on campus to support students and employees;? Establishing quarantine facilities to provide student accommodations in the event a student tests positive for COVID-19; and? Ensuring that any students who arrive from outside the country complete a 14-day off-campus quarantine period

prior to being allowed on campus.The health and safety of our college community is top priority and we will continue to go above and beyond to demonstrate our commitment and care.

Do you think there have been any benefits realized as Loyalist has adapted to offering services and programs remotely?For many students, including those in the Bancroft region, Loyalist College's blended program delivery this Fall will offer additional flexibility and options for distance learning. We are engaging and reaching learners who may not otherwise have considered pursuing post-secondary education, due to the traditional face-to-face requirements of many of our full-time program offerings. Particularly for mature students who would like to advance or change careers, online or blended post-graduate or diploma programs may be easier to balance with other aspects of their professional and personal lives. While so much has changed with the pandemic, one thing remains certain ? the transformative power of post-secondary education in helping individuals build resiliency and progress in the face of adversity.To support online and blended student learning, our faculty and staff are learning new digital and virtual applications and exploring new andragogy principles. The college is so proud of what they have accomplished in such a short period of time, to ensure a smooth transition to remote delivery.We are redesigning our Student Success Services online to easily connect students with mentors, resources and informational sessions, such as our Learn 2 Learn sessions and tutoring services, summer ?Smart Start Loyalist' online transition course, and our new Student Remote Learning Kit website. Loyalist College is also developing a robust new online Fall Orientation program to engage new and returning students wherever they are. The focus on student success is evident even when we are away from campus, as so much of what makes Loyalist unique resides in the people who care so much about helping students achieve their goals.

Do you think the pandemic has the potential to help build more opportunities for E-learning through Loyalist?As remote work and learning becomes a way of life, the college has been discussing and exploring how it will build on its digital learning framework to extend postsecondary access and attainment. Now more than ever, students, including displaced workers, need education to acquire new skills to succeed in what will be a very different post-pandemic labour market. To meet our region's changing job market needs, we will continue to work closely with local employers to develop relevant, innovative curriculum.