

More than ever, summer is for school: A coronavirus imperative

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When I was in college, summers were set aside for full-time jobs and future-boosting internships. The Social Security check I got each month as a “benefit” for losing my father young went directly to rent; summer provided a chance to accumulate cash to put toward the next year’s tuition. But summer always meant a break from school study. We worked hard, but we put our education on pause and exchanged textbooks and exams for hands-on life experience that also earned us much-needed extra money. Summer school was for students who needed to make up classes they had failed.

Coronavirus has radically reshaped college for everyone. It should transform summer as well. With many businesses shut down, and most government offices closed and unlikely to re-open at full strength soon, jobs and internships will be acutely scarce this summer. Study and research abroad won’t resume quickly, either. But we in the Hunter community like to, as Mario Cuomo once so colorfully put it, “take sour lemons and make sweet lemonade.” As we stay home and keep ourselves and our families healthy and safe, students — and colleges

— must use this time to socially distance productively. Toward that end, Hunter is planning to offer the most diverse menu of summer courses in its history, featuring top scholars, teachers and practitioners, so students can turn a lost season into a productive one. Schools across the city and country should do the same.

Summer 2020 will present college students with unique opportunities to fast-track their education, advance in their major fields of study, or take one of those electives they never had time to schedule. Rising seniors can get a head-start toward graduation. Incoming freshmen can get introductory courses under their belts early. We can learn new skills, study languages, explore fresh areas of research, and even pick up musical instruments.

Meanwhile, we have taken this opportunity to assess and improve remote teaching. The online learning experience, already streamlined, will be top-of-the-line by summer. Data analytics, a relatively new and effective way of monitoring and predicting student performance, will revolutionize academic counseling and permit schools to direct undergraduates to studies in which they are most likely to succeed, and toward professions at which they are most certain to thrive.

The motto of Hunter College, *Mihi Cura Futuri*, “the care of the future is mine,” has never been more relevant than it is today as we chart a future that will be forever marked by how we come through the coronavirus crisis — including how students maintain their pursuit of college education.

It is the responsibility of every institution of higher learning to expand summer curriculum even as we manage this unusual spring semester. We must provide opportunities for students to take hold of their futures and make the best of these challenging times by attending summer school classes online.

This year, Hunter will be a summer place. So should every college in the nation.

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