



BENTLEY UNIVERSITY

August 10, 2021

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

I hope your continued efforts to prepare for the fall semester are going well.

As we welcome our students to in-person learning at Bentley this fall, I'd like to remind all of us to resist the urge to rush back to "normal." All of us have been through so much over the past year and a half, and it will be imperative to acknowledge our shared struggles and to remind our students that Bentley is a supportive community that will help them as they adjust to on-campus classes.

We have heard a lot about pandemic-related learning gaps among students at the K-12 level. Due to pandemic teaching conditions, many teachers had to skip over content that they normally would have included in their course. Students experiencing burnout may have had a much harder time learning and retaining key concepts. Incoming first-year college students experienced this in their junior/senior year high school classes. Continuing undergraduate students have been impacted, as well.

I want to draw special attention to our rising sophomores as we prepare for the fall. While some of our sophomores lived on campus and participated in hybrid classes last year, many have never attended an in-person class at Bentley. We know how dynamic our classrooms are when we can engage with our students in person, and we want to remain mindful of the learning environments that our sophomores, in particular, experienced last year. I encourage you to review [this article](#) from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which explores the experiences of our rising sophomores in greater depth. Please note that I will be sending a message to sophomores later today to address some of the concerns and anxieties that they have reported; you can find the language that I plan to send them at the bottom of this email.

We should not assume that our students will return to campus this fall with the same content knowledge they would have had pre-pandemic. One concrete way to support our students is to build in time at the very beginning of the semester to gauge where they are in terms of academic content.



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I have charged our campus teaching and learning experts with developing resources you can use to determine whether your students are dealing with learning gaps and, if so, decide how to respond. These on-demand resources will be available at [Keep Teaching](#) starting Thursday, August 19, and include:

- Ideas for informal, non-graded, in-class assessments you can do with your students during the first week of class
- Links to technology resources such as Poll Everywhere
- Examples of how to frame these exercises for your students in a positive way, not in deficit-based language, to alleviate concerns students may have about academic challenges as they return to in-person learning
- Links to the Bentley Learning Labs where tutoring resources will be available

For more information about these resources, please contact [Nathan Carter](#), Wilder Professor and Professor Mathematical Sciences, [Suzanne Dove](#), Executive Director, Badavas Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, or [Tracy Noga](#), Wilder Professor and Professor of Accountancy.

Much thanks,

Donna Maria Blancero, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Mystica Alexander, Associate Provost for Research and Faculty
Cathy Carlson, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education
Rick Oches, Dean of Arts and Sciences
Bill Read, Dean of Business

Dear Members of the Class of 2024,

I hope you are enjoying a safe, restful summer. I look forward to seeing all of you on campus in just a few weeks as we begin the fall term.

Though we're all eager to be back together in person, it is also normal to feel somewhat anxious or worried about what life will be like at Bentley this year – particularly in the classroom. While some of you participated in hybrid courses last year, I know that many of



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you have not yet attended an in-person class at Bentley. Please know that our faculty and staff are committed to helping you as you adjust to on-campus classes.

Our faculty recognize that your last two years of education were disrupted by pandemic teaching. This might mean there was content that your instructors were unable to cover last year, or that they went over it so fast that it was hard to absorb. In your first few weeks of class, your instructors may talk with you to find out which concepts you already know and which are less familiar. This is a way to make sure they can provide any review materials and resources so you can succeed in their class. Our faculty, Academic Advising, and the Bentley Learning Labs will be available to support you as you acclimate to in-person learning.

Please do not hesitate to speak with your instructors if you have any questions or concerns about your course content. I implore you to use our campus resources, including your instructors' office hours, to guide you toward success.

I know we have a big year ahead, and I look forward to celebration your many accomplishments.

Cordially,

Donna Maria Blancero, PhD

Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers