

July 28, 2020

To All JD Students  
Widener University  
Delaware Law School

**Re: Revised Plan for Remote Fall 2020 Opening**

Dear Delaware Law School Students:

I am writing to convey the news that all Widener University Delaware Law School JD courses for the fall 2020 semester will now be taught in a remote format. This decision, which is a change from our prior planning, is aligned with the new policies announced today by Widener University President Julie Wollman. Unlike some other academic disciplines, which can only be taught physically in an on-campus environment, law school instruction can be delivered with genuine excellence in remote formats.

This decision has been made to ensure the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff. Recent surges in the COVID-19 pandemic pose serious public health risks. The course of the pandemic in the coming weeks and months is extremely uncertain and difficult to predict. We have reached the judgment that the prudent course is to continue the remote learning formats that we have been using during our summer terms through this coming fall.

The move to the remote teaching and learning of law parallels the move to the remote practice of law that now exists throughout much of the legal system. Across the nation, lawyers and judges are conducting the business of the law heavily through remote platforms.

As a teacher and as a practicing lawyer, I have found that law can be practiced and taught and learned as effectively through remote platforms as in person. Conducting courses remotely does require greater innovation and thought than in-person courses, as professors and students alike adapt to remote learning platforms such as Zoom and Canvas. Remote instruction, however, can be excellent in its quality and in its learning outcomes.

Throughout the summer, faculty members have been working intensely on re-configuring the design of their courses to provide for superb learning environments, in the event that a decision to go entirely remote was implemented. Faculty members will continue in the coming weeks to refine those efforts. Individual faculty members will soon be communicating with the students registered in their courses on assignments, class formats, and virtual office hours.

The Law School is also planning a robust extra-curricular programming effort on social justice issues, on the world-wide challenges posed by the pandemic, and on other topical legal issues of interest to our community. We will convene social events, and student organizational activities, through remote formats.

We are all in this together. You are in a generation of American law students that is entering this great and learned profession in unprecedented circumstances, at a time in which the nation and the world desperately need the professionalism, calm, and leadership of thoughtful lawyers. I urge you to accept these challenges with optimism and resolve. My hope is that your generation of new lawyers will be instrumental in achieving authentic progress toward the ongoing human quest for societies that are more stable, equitable, and just.

Sincerely,

/s/ Rodney A. Smolla

Rodney A. Smolla  
Dean and Professor of Law