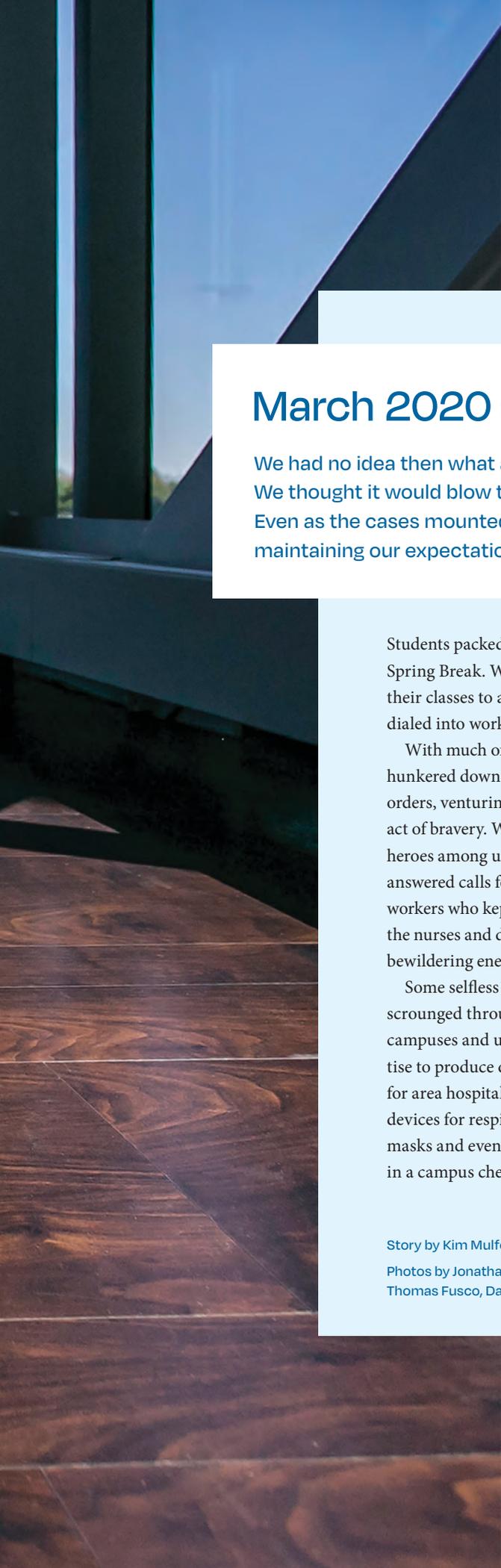


COPING WITH COVID





March 2020 seems like a lifetime ago.

We had no idea then what a global pandemic might mean for us. We thought it would blow through in a matter of weeks, maybe in a few months. Even as the cases mounted, we fixed our attention on the future, maintaining our expectations, goals and dreams. We kept on keeping on.

Students packed up and headed home for Spring Break. Within days, faculty pivoted their classes to a virtual format and staff dialed into work each day from home.

With much of New Jersey's population hunkered down under stay-at-home orders, venturing out in public became an act of bravery. We recognized everyday heroes among us: the first responders who answered calls for help, the grocery store workers who kept the shelves stocked, the nurses and doctors facing down a bewildering enemy.

Some selfless faculty and students scrounged through supplies around our campuses and used their time and expertise to produce desperately needed supplies for area hospitals: intubation shields, devices for respirators, 3D-printed face masks and even hand sanitizer concocted in a campus chemistry lab.

With so many restaurants and businesses shuttered, our friends and neighbors needed help, too. We shared food and delivered meals. We offered artistic performances online and helped teachers around the world make the switch to remote instruction—all in this together.

By December, when the first COVID-19 vaccines became available to health care workers, medical students and first responders, we opened a regional vaccination center at our School of Osteopathic Medicine, marking the beginning of what we hoped would spell the end of the pandemic.

Nearly a year later, we're still in it. We're still looking toward the future with every expectation that this, too, shall pass.

And it will.

Story by Kim Mulford '94 and Barbara Baals

Photos by Jonathan Kolbe, Kevin Monko, Avi Steinhardt, Craig Terry, Robert Thorpe, Thomas Fusco, David Cimetta and readers, including Julia Marshall and the Shainline family.

LEFT: Simple signs throughout Rowan University's campuses remind visitors to follow public health guidelines. Such widespread messaging helped (and continue to help) faculty, students and staff adjust to ever-changing instructions on how to keep one another safe.



Heading home

On March 9, 2020, Gov. Murphy declared a public health emergency and Rowan University announced Spring Break would be extended to two weeks to allow faculty to shift to virtual instruction, if need be.

Many students headed home—some for good. Uncertainty brought a sense of both urgency and inertia. Normal routines stalled and shifted.

Still without any reported cases on our campuses, the University weighed the next steps as we began to navigate and respond to the first pandemic in our history.

There would be much to do.





COVID-19 Update: Rowan to Restrict Access to Buildings. Read more: bit.ly/2wmaX9m



Coronavirus Update
March 19, 2020





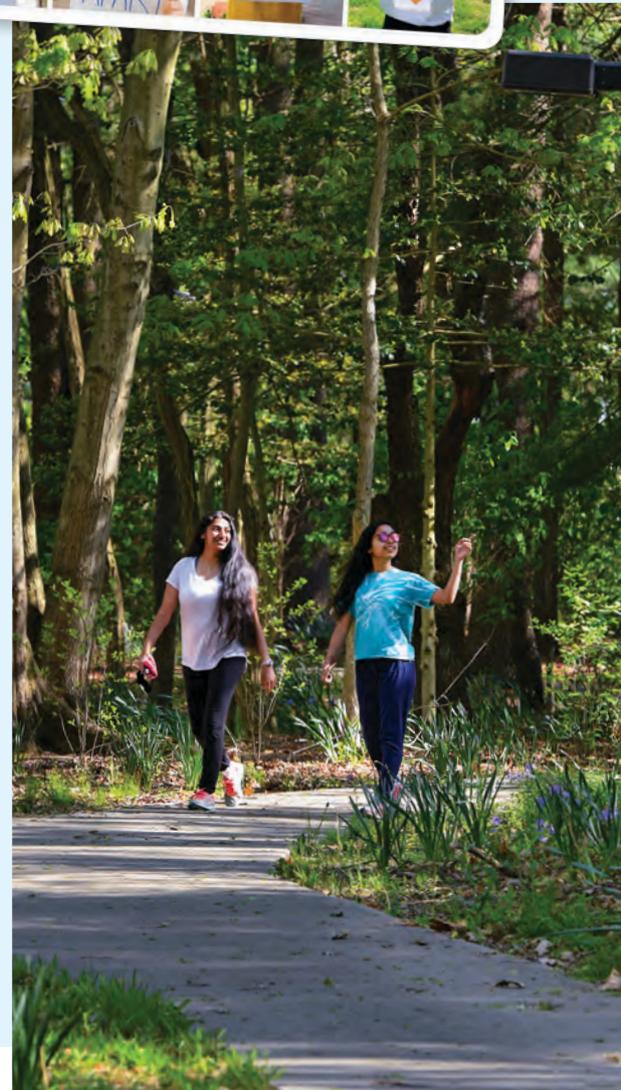
A quiet campus

With our first two cases of infection announced during Spring Break, Rowan closed buildings to in-person learning and switched to remote operations in an effort to smother the outbreak.

Thanks to video calls, social media and the miracles of modern technology, a scattered Rowan community found new ways to stay together and keep progressing.

Under advice to stay at home if they could, the handful of students and employees left on campus joined visitors who sought solace and respite outdoors. Many found the main campus a vital and vast public park. Bright blooms signaled the world waking from winter...but in an eerie quiet.



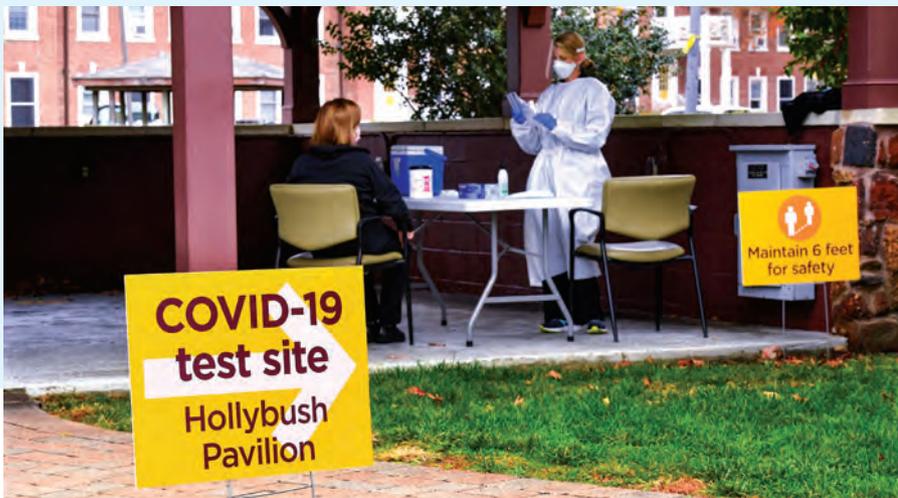




Rowan Athletics
@RowanAthletics

Today, we give a big shoutout to Justin List '08! A @RowanMSoccer player, Justin, is part of the Kangaroo Crew at Texas Children's in Houston, working as an emergency air & ground transport respiratory therapist!

There isn't enough thanks for people like you! ❤️!
#RowanPROUD





Answering the call

Amid stay-at-home orders, Rowan's community of doctors, nurses, engineers, chemists and researchers stepped up. They shared newly refined designs for a reusable, 3D-printed face mask (top right). Researchers began investigating the virus and its effects on the blood-brain barrier (top left), the psyche and on society as a whole.

Administrators worked with industry partners like ExxonMobil to address supply shortages for simple things like hand sanitizer. First responders and newly essential employees took on new risks and responsibilities to keep the world running.

And when a critical care doctor requested intubation shields to protect her staff, engineering faculty and students produced the first within 24 hours.

"It's just a box, but sometimes, it's the right thing at the right time," said Francis "Mac" Haas, assistant professor in the Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering.





COMMENCEMENT 2020

Honoring our graduates

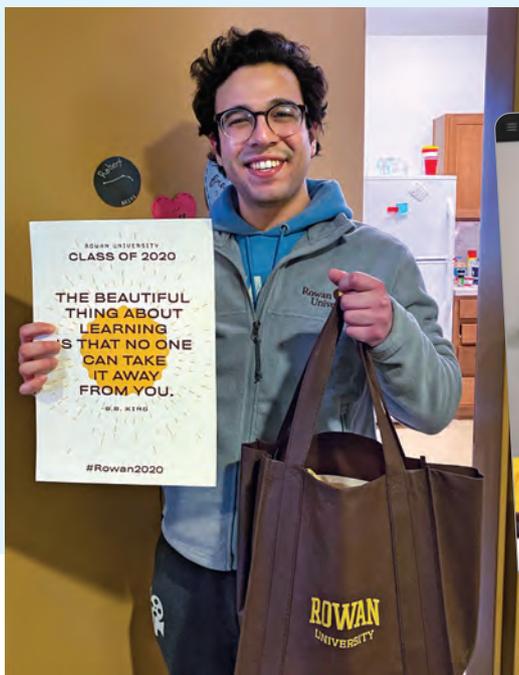
COVID-19 delayed—but did not deter—us from celebrating the Class of 2020. In a silent, empty stadium, President Houshmand recorded remarks to encourage everyone and promise a proper celebration when it could be done safely.

While many institutions cancelled Commencement ceremonies, the Rowan community rose up—and masked up—to honor our graduating Profs. After a University-wide virtual program in May, in-person ceremonies took place in July on the University Green with strictly limited and carefully spaced seating.

During three days, 1,800 graduates accepted their diploma covers at 13 carefully choreographed programs.

After each ceremony, dedicated volunteers and employees reset and wiped down hundreds of chairs.

Even through their masks, grads and guests shared smiles, tears and cheers for the spirited and resilient Class of 2020.







Caring for one another

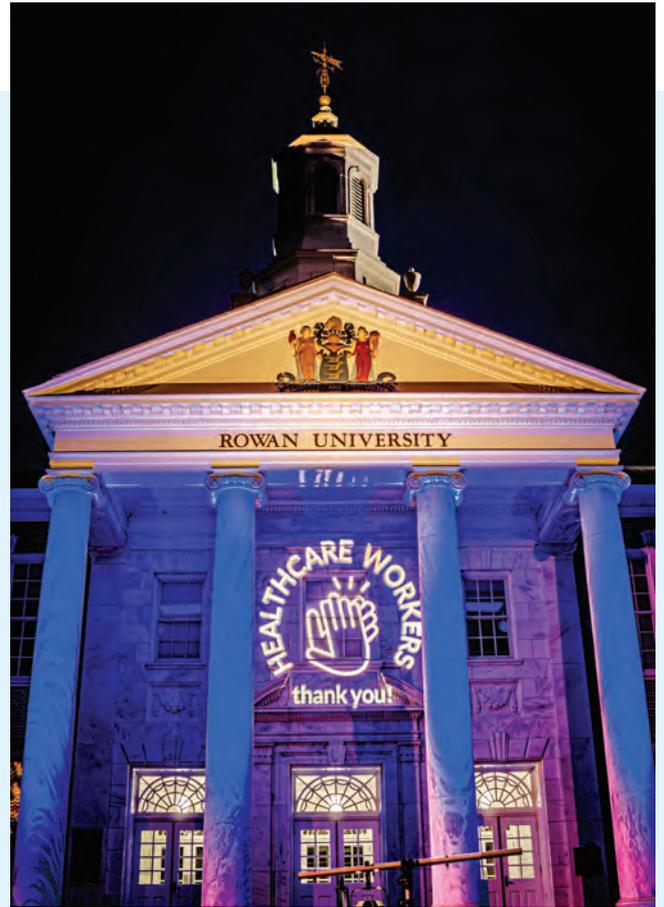
The pandemic exposed rifts among us—as well as our ability to come together. Summer 2020 saw a national outcry over systemic racism and violence, and many in our community marched in the streets and called for change.

Already a university community committed to serving our neighbors, we found even more ways to “be the change.” At President Ali Houshmand’s urging, Rowan partnered with Gourmet Dining and the Borough of Glassboro to respond to food insecurity that fall.

With students’ help and donors’ support, the Rowan-Glassboro Neighbors Table delivered meals to local families in need.

“No one in our community should ever go hungry,” Houshmand said. “One of the most important things we can do as University neighbors and proud citizens is assisting others through our talents and our service. I’m excited to see this program serve our neighbors and friends and I know our students will benefit tremendously through their involvement.”





SONGS TO WASH YOUR HANDS TO



🎵 DON'T STAND SO CLOSE TO ME
THE POLICE

Don't stand,
don't stand so
Don't stand so
close to me
Don't stand,
don't stand so
Don't stand so
close to me



SCAN FOR THE SPOTIFY PLAYLIST



#RowanPROUD & #ProfStrong. Live it. Own it. #MaskUpProfs

Earning accolades

Rowan's approach to managing campus life during the pandemic involved thoughtful planning; strong community and statewide partnerships; decision-making focused on health, wellness and student success; innovation and creativity; and comprehensive communication.

To that end, signs and messages throughout Rowan campuses reminded our community to stay united, diligent and strong.

As part of her 15,000-mile national tour to assess how colleges and universities addressed the pandemic, Dr. Deborah Birx, then the response coordinator for the White House Coronavirus Task Force, praised Rowan.

"It's really evident that you care about your students, as well as your community and faculty," said Birx, whose tour earned full-page coverage in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (right). Rowan, Birx said, had "the best signage that we have seen at any campus."

Pandemic praise

Deborah Birx's Good-News Tour

During an appearance at Plymouth State University this month, Deborah L. Birx, response coordinator for the White House Coronavirus Task Force, has been delivering on campus. Birx, who has visited 27 colleges and traveled more than 15,000 miles on her tour, often reportedly shares driving tips with colleagues. She has inspected numerous laboratories, visited classrooms from an online professor, visited administrative offices about their pandemic plans, and received the same advice about the importance of masks, distancing, and regular testing.

"She has also visited our competition. Last month, she visited the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. While visiting the University of Mississippi, she said it was clear that administrators had 'put the health of the students first, the health of the community.' At Rowan, she noted the 'standing ovation' administrators had made us 'open the university and to keep it open.' Chancellor had serious challenges in these offices, with more than 1,000 students leaving positive since June.

She may have also gone slightly over the top during a visit to Texas A&M's campus last month, when she said the university had some of the "best infrastructure that we have seen." As *The Chronicle of Higher Education* pointed out at the time, Texas A&M's position of September. According to the university's COVID-19 dashboard, that number was recently just under 4 percent. It's a statistic, if anything, to get the high side.

Before her speech at Plymouth State, Birx was introduced by the university's president, Donald Birx, who also happens to be

her older brother. He said he was always looking for ideas for advice, including from people like Birx to inspire. "I'm a job thief," he said. "You can't tell from the recording whether she laughed or groaned at the reference to a now-infamous press conference during which Trump suggested inspecting classroom students and using 'goggles inside the body.'"

In her speech, Birx commended universities like Plymouth State that chose to hold in-person classes, and seek a new normality for those who want the more cautious, believed in their students enough to open their doors," she said. "It shows that you believe, and we're learning that students were completely online will welcome their students as in-person learning."

Birx also made it clear that she believes that progress is necessary will mean that the spring semester for colleges will be very different from the fall. She thinks that faculty and staff members may be able to get vaccinated before the end of January, which is why that is encouraging colleges to delay the beginning of their semesters until then. That is a more optimistic timeline than has been offered by some other experts.

In an interview, Donald Birx said he has already followed his sister's advice and will continue to do so over the summer, when the idea of returning fall classes seemed a bit of a stretch.

He reassured: "I said to her, 'Can we really do this?' And she said, 'Yes. So long as you follow the procedures and policies,' he recalled.

"Donald said it had been 'surprised' watching his sister go from a widely respected, if not widely known, government official to a household name. It was "hard to watch" when she'd been on the receiving end of opprobrium and he'd been the one to help people because of her leadership," he said of her decision to join the task force. "And she knew what would probably happen at the end of the election cycle."

In her speech at Plymouth State, Birx has been thanked by the full her organization has taken, and by the fact that the Birx family fight she's been under in recent months might spell the end of a decade-long stint in public service. "When you work on a presidential election year," she said, "you know it's a difficult event in your government career." —TOM BOVILLI

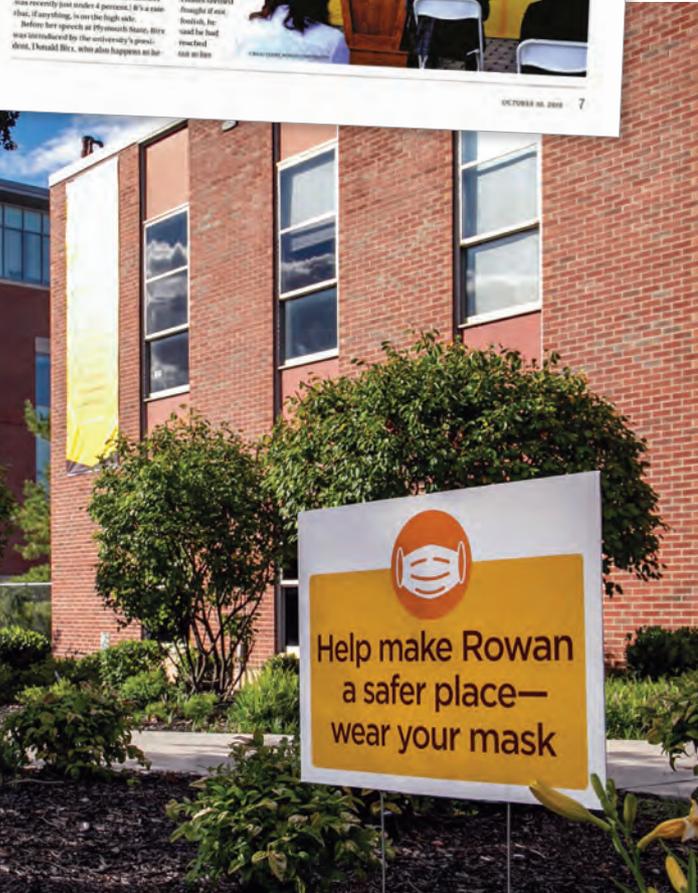


OCTOBER 16, 2020 7



 Rowan University
@RowanUniversity

#NationalPumpkinDay serving as a reminder to #MaskUpProfs. 🍻 🍻



'Every shot saves a life'

Rowan's health and wellness professionals, Rowan Medicine clinical practices, public health and infectious disease experts, nursing students and others had been part of the 24/7 mission to fight the pandemic from the start.

As soon as the first COVID-19 vaccines became available, students at Rowan's two medical schools volunteered by the hundreds to deliver vaccines to the front lines: in hospital conference rooms, mass vaccination sites, pop-up clinics and special population drives.

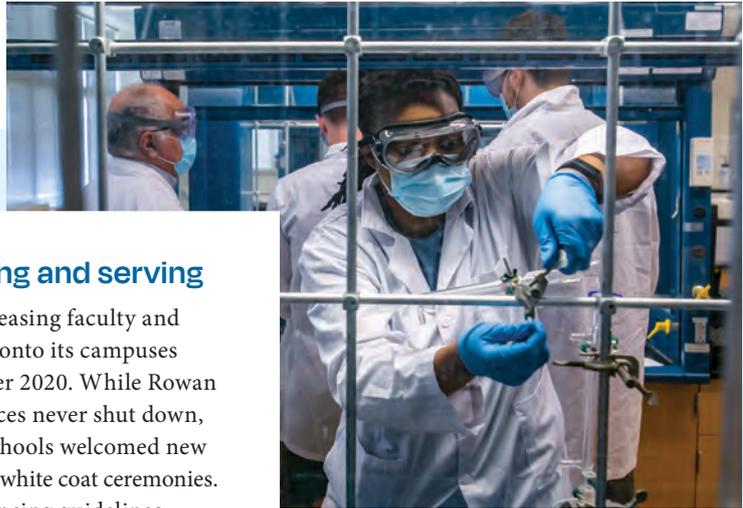
At press time, the School of Osteopathic Medicine had vaccinated more than 50,000 people and Cooper Medical School of Rowan University had delivered tens of thousands of vaccinations with clinical partners and volunteers. Vaccines changed the odds in favor of everyone willing to roll up a sleeve.

Both medical schools made concerted efforts to get vaccines to underserved populations, noted Anjani Patel, a third-year SOM student.

"We know we have to focus on marginalized communities," Patel said during the push to vaccinate South Jersey residents. "Every shot saves a life."







Still learning and serving

Rowan began easing faculty and students back onto its campuses during summer 2020. While Rowan clinical practices never shut down, the medical schools welcomed new classes at their white coat ceremonies.

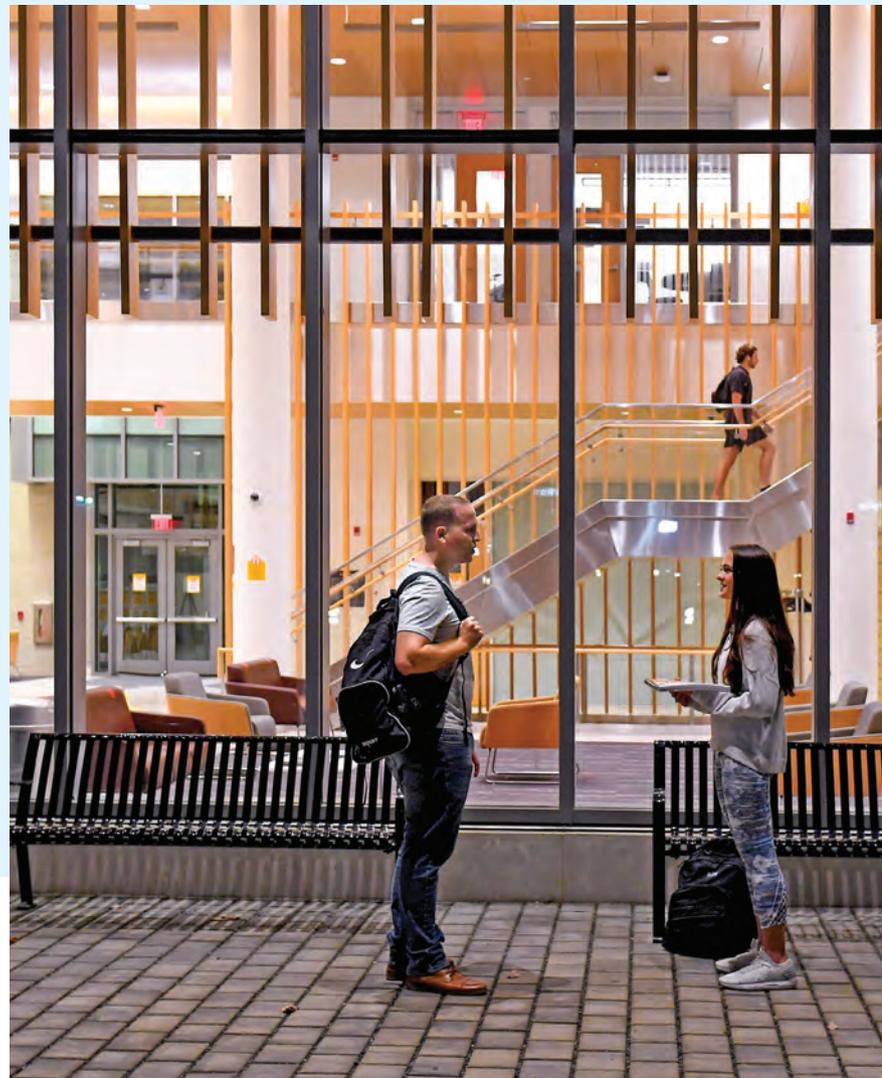
Social distancing guidelines, mask-wearing and intensified cleaning protocols enabled some main campus students to return last fall to hands-on learning, particularly those in the arts, sciences and engineering. For many more, hybrid courses with a mix of in-person and remote instruction offered greater flexibility for faculty and their students.

By fall 2021, vaccinations and mask requirements brought a sense of near-normalcy to classrooms and labs.

Technology made a tremendous difference in Rowan's ability to continue teaching and research during the pandemic. So did brave educators, dedicated facilities and support staff and the thousands of people persisting alongside and encouraging each member of the Rowan community.









Making (distant) connections

With widespread mask-wearing and social distancing in place, in-person activities returned in autumn 2020 and Rowan was able to maintain momentum through the new year. Early fall 2021 still requires masks and distancing, minor inconveniences in making life together possible.

At outdoor yoga, intramural sports, club meetings, studying or hanging out with friends, students have adapted to COVID-19 protocols designed to keep community members safe.

The University installed tents throughout its campuses in 2020 to increase areas for outdoor dining and seating, as well as open-air classrooms, meeting spots and, of course, virus testing and other services. Students and employees continue to make the most of the shelters to collaborate, socialize and, most importantly, stay healthy.

They wear masks. They bump elbows. They look out for each other. And they keep finding ways to connect and thrive. As Profs do.

