March 3, 2020 - Campuswide email

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff:

With thanks to Dean Randy Hays for chairing this important effort, I am pleased to report that the recently constituted Coronavirus Task Force held its initial meeting today and made good progress in assuring that Centre College is prepared to address the continuing spread of the COVID-19 disease.

Please bear with a longer message here, since I want everyone to be informed about our conversations and the due diligence with which we are acting to prepare for the worst, all while hoping for the best.

Thirty people attended the meeting, representing every relevant office and department across campus. Adding to the existing presence of scientists on the committee, I was pleased that Peggy Richey, Boles Professor of Biology and Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, also joined the group.

At the start of the meeting, Randy emphasized the importance of ongoing communication, and you can be assured this will be our goal.

I would add that we will always turn to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as our main source of information, and I encourage our campus community to do the same. I direct you to the CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 website available HERE.

Kathy Jones, director of student health, then walked the group through a very informative presentation from a recent webinar she attended that involved colleagues from institutions across the country, including places like Georgetown and Stanford universities. This provided a common vocabulary and helpful baseline of information as we move forward.

This was followed by an overview of issues related to our study abroad program by Lori Hartmann, interim director of our Center for Global Citizenship. She is in daily contact with the directors of our two programs in London and Strasbourg, as well as the smaller handful of students (and their program directors) currently elsewhere in Mexico, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Spain. Parents and family members of all the students are also being kept updated.

While Lori is focused on current programs, she is looking ahead to possible scenarios for the summer and fall as well.

Above all, I would emphasize that we have insisted that our students currently abroad refrain from traveling to Italy during Spring Break. I also strongly encourage our campus community
to act out of an abundance of caution when considering travel to other countries that the CDC has identified as having confirmed cases of COVID-19 (the list is constantly updated and available HERE).

Finally, Ann Young, director of student life and housing, outlined scenarios in which we could address the need for students to be isolated or quarantined. In saying so, I remind everyone that we have already successfully responded to a recommendation from the Kentucky Department for Public Health in early February to isolate a small handful of students for 14 days who had recently traveled from China.

While we will undoubtedly never immediately have all the answers, because the situation continues to evolve so rapidly, the meeting ended with a very positive sense of confidence that we are asking all the right questions and have a very strong and capable team in place to remain nimble in our responses.

The task force will continue to gather regularly, with subsets of the whole meeting more frequently as specific issues arise involving particular concerns.

As I’ve said before, we are all in this together, and I am grateful to everyone for the care and compassion with which we treat one another as members of the Centre community.

With apologies for such a long message, I do believe the topic merited your patience. Thank you for your attention.

My best,

John