March 13, 2020 - Campuswide email

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

The rapidly developing novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic requires all of us in higher education to act responsibly based on the particular characteristics of our own institutions.

In short, there is no effective one-size-fits-all solution for colleges and universities, because the combinations of factors like general academic calendars, the timing of breaks, geographic location, average class sizes, student-faculty ratios, and percentage of students living on campus all vary and make any decision challenging.

After careful consideration, here is how we are planning to manage in these times.

We will continue our regular schedule of classes next week, March 16-20. From there, Spring Break will occur as scheduled and also be extended for an additional week. This will allow faculty to be fully prepared to shift to online instruction, which will begin Monday, April 6, and continue until the end of the academic term. The last day of classes will remain May 12, followed by finals.

Because we are sensitive to those in our community who have higher risk factors, we have already accommodated and will continue to accommodate unique and special circumstances, even as this may involve planning for the coming week.

Campus offices will remain open. Kay Drake, vice president for human resources, has outlined flexible staff work options in a separate message, particularly in light of local schools being closed until April 13.

Details regarding moving out of residence halls will be shared soon. That said, we understand there will be students who are unable to return home. Anyone having special needs or considerations regarding housing and meals, please be in touch with the Office of Housing and Residence Life.

As well, we anticipate that some students will have difficulty with online instruction, either because of equipment or connectivity. An online form will be sent out as soon as possible for those who anticipate challenges to help the College understand how we can work to make necessary accommodations.

Painful as this is, we believe it is the most conscientious decision we can make at the present moment to protect the health and safety of our campus community and still work to meet our obligation to provide the best academic experience for our students.
Anticipating such a possibility, faculty have already been actively considering how to achieve their course learning goals virtually, which will be ably assisted by the Center for Teaching and Learning and ITS.

In the meantime, we must all be extra vigilant in practicing safe hygiene, following all recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Elbow bumps are preferred instead of handshakes, as is social distancing when possible, along with avoiding large groups.

To that end, we will be reducing the amount of outside contact by limiting previously scheduled public events, evaluated on a case-by-case basis, including admission events and Norton Center performances. In light of recent SAA and NCAA actions to cancel spring sports, all athletic competitions are cancelled effective today through the end of the academic year.

Many precautions are being pursued, such as the recent decision by Sodexo to eliminate self-serve stations and plate all food in the dining hall. In addition, all non-essential travel for students, faculty, and staff is strongly discouraged to protect the health and well-being of our campus community.

The pandemic has also impacted our study abroad programs, and our students in London and Strasbourg are returning home, with an expectation to complete their learning goals in some appropriate fashion.

It remains our plan to provide a meaningful Commencement experience for our seniors. As we get closer to the end of the term, we will determine how this can be done safely and responsibly given circumstances at the time.

Having made this decision, I remind us all that everything involved with the COVID-19 pandemic is very fluid. As such, things may change, requiring patience and flexibility every step of the way.

In the meantime, expect additional messages to outline the details of how we move forward. It will be my plan to be in touch with you regularly. If you have questions regarding this message, I invite you to be in touch with your professors, your immediate supervisor or coach, my office, or any member of the senior staff.

My best,

John – P. Roush

P.S. As always, consult our Coronavirus Information Center webpage for updates (available HERE).