



OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

March 17, 2020

Dear St. Margaret's School Family,

The St. Margaret's Administration and Board of Governors has been closely following the Coronavirus pandemic over the past few weeks. Throughout the process, we have considered first and foremost the health and well-being of our girls, our campus team and our place in the broader communities in which we live. As I communicated on [March 12](#), St. Margaret's will launch a distance learning initiative on March 23.

Events that have transpired since that communication have led to our having to take broader actions to help mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus, both for the benefit of our St. Margaret's community, but also for the sake of our greater society. After consultation with the Board of Governors and my administrative team, we have decided that **campus will be closed for students until further notice, likely through the end of the Spring Trimester**. While this decision is personally painful, it is important in times such as these to truly live our Episcopal values "...love of God, love of our girls and the families we serve, love of our extended community of alumnae and friends, and the love we feel as stewards of this beautiful place we call home." We value our St. Margaret's community, but also understand that we serve a greater good and our actions can potentially affect a community much larger than ours.

This decision was not lightly made. We have considered the impacts on our close-knit community. For nearly 100 years, St. Margaret's has built caring relationships with devoted teachers and friendships nurtured on our historic campus. I am especially saddened by how this will affect our Seniors. I understand the importance of our traditions to Senior girls: Spring Family Weekend, May Ball, Lantern Ceremony and, of course, graduation. While we cannot predict how the situation may play out, we will continue to track conditions. Should the opportunity arise, we have plans in the works to celebrate our Seniors, as well as the dedicated faculty and staff who make St. Margaret's so special.

Academic Update

Beginning Monday, March 23, St. Margaret's will launch our remote learning program. In addition to learning work for all classes, this will also include co-curricular work such as: college counseling, wellness programming, meetings with advisers, counseling appointments with [Ms. Cameron Sgroi](#), Chapel talks with [Pastor Baker](#), nightly Sisterhood Forums for all students to engage on a voluntary basis, and personalized conditioning plans from the Athletic Department.

Support will continue uninterrupted for our students engaged in Wheat Center services (academic coaching, math and writing labs, reading reinforcement, etc.). We recognize the importance of these programs and are committed to their sustained use throughout this uncertain time.

Students will receive a schedule for the first week of remote learning via email later this week. The schedule will adjust as we "settle in" to the remote learning routine and we will adapt our all-school Google Calendar to reflect these modifications.

Residential Update

For our domestic residential students and families:

We will offer specific dates and times for domestic families to come and pick up students' belongings. In accordance with CDC recommendations, we will wait until April 1 to begin this process. Further instructions and sign-up times will be offered via email from Dean of Students [Cheryl MacPherson](#). If you have any specific questions, please email Ms. MacPherson or call her at 703-618-1449. For the safety of all, please do not come to campus without an appointment.

For our international residential students and families:

We encourage our international students to return home as soon as it is safe to do so and complete remote learning from home through the end of the trimester. However, we recognize that given the current conditions in various parts of the globe, as well as airline ticket availability, this may not be possible. St. Margaret's is committed to the best care possible



OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

of all of our international students for as long as is necessary and will provide supervision and support on campus for international students for as long as is needed.

We cannot monitor the well-being of any St. Margaret's international student who is not on our campus, with a family member or with a guardian. Therefore, we ask the following of all international students:

1. Please contact Dean of Students MacPherson today to discuss your intended travel plans and/or return time to campus, as well as safekeeping of your belongings. She can be reached at 703-618-1449, via email, or Google Hangouts.
2. If you are not with a guardian or family member, we will discuss your return to campus and/or travel home.
3. If you are unwell or experiencing any symptoms of illness, stay in your current location and contact Ms. MacPherson at 703-618-1449/cmacpherson@sms.org.

For our day students:

If you have belongings you would like to collect from campus, you may contact Ms. MacPherson to schedule an appointment time to visit campus during business hours. Please remember to make your visits to campus brief and respect CDC guidelines on social distancing.

Moving Forward

We recognize that being a "remote Scottie" can never re-create campus life. Each day, our faculty teach the importance of creative problem solving. Now, St. Margaret's has the opportunity to demonstrate to our students how we put creativity into a real-world scenario. We will bring all the creative energy and innovative power of our faculty and staff to challenge and inspire our students and learn from each other. We will collaborate as a team and strive to connect with our students as closely as if they were with us in the classroom.

We are looking at ways to re-create campus life to maintain connectedness: online social groups and clubs, remote activities and collaborative projects, one-on-one and group discussions, health and wellness activities. We understand our obligation to continue delivering the level of educational rigor and engagement for which St. Margaret's is renowned.

Our faculty, counselors and coaches will be readily accessible, by email or phone. Should you have any questions regarding our delivery of online education, please contact Ms. MacPherson.

School-Sponsored Events and Campus Life

Our decision to create a fully remote experience for the spring trimester means, of course, that we are cancelling all School-sponsored gatherings, both on and off campus, until further notice. Unfortunately, this includes all athletic practices and games; extracurricular clubs; and previously scheduled activities and ceremonies. As I previously stated, we have plans to recognize our Senior girls, should we receive approval and if these activities are deemed safe for our SMS family and greater community. We understand the sense of Sisterhood these activities encourage. As we develop our online offerings, we are keenly aware of the importance of competition and teamwork experiences in connecting and highlighting individual and class accomplishments, and maintaining our sense of Scottie Pride.

Further Guidance

We recognize that you may have questions regarding our decision to close campus and deliver online education. We, too, understand the situation is fluid and we need to remain as flexible and adaptable as possible to changing conditions. I will be communicating with you each week on our progress and situation. Additionally, we hope to answer many of your questions on our website <https://www.sms.org/about/covid-19>.

Ms. MacPherson and I will be available tonight, Tuesday, March 17 from 6:00-7:00 PM EDT on a Google Meet. *Students will receive an invitation to this Google Meet in their school e-mail.* Please feel free to log-in and participate. We will answer any question you have to the best of our ability. We want to unite together during this difficult time.



St. Margaret's School

Belong. Believe. Become.

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Our Pledge to You

In reaching these difficult decisions, I have relied upon the wisdom and guidance of St. Margaret's mission and vision. We are clearly confronting a significant global crisis, and we must be resolute in our commitment to do our part, for ourselves and for our greater community. We call on you – our students, parents and families, to unite with St. Margaret's in this challenging time. By confronting the challenge together, we will grow in character and we will forge even stronger bonds of Sisterhood.

As we move through these challenges, I pledge to each of you:

- To put the health and well-being of our students, our faculty and staff and our St. Margaret's family at the forefront of any decision we make.
- To demonstrate compassion and empathy to our students learning, and our faculty teaching, under these conditions.
- To communicate regularly, honestly and accurately all decisions we make and all information we have at hand.
- To remain accessible to any questions you may have.
- To actively express gratitude to those who continue to make St. Margaret's School a special place to learn and live.
- To proactively plan for the day we can physically gather to celebrate and recognize our unity.

I cannot thank you enough for the patience you have demonstrated during this unprecedented situation. It remains my greatest privilege to serve our girls and their families. My family and I are keeping each of you in our prayers and I trust that God will bless each of you and St. Margaret's School.

Sincerely,

Catherine M. Sgroi

Catherine M. Sgroi P'00

Head of School