

COVID-19 Update Message from President Thomas J. Botzman March 11 ,2020

Dear Members of the Misericordia University Community,

Over the past several weeks, the University's Emergency Preparedness Team and the President's Cabinet have monitored carefully the worldwide spread of COVID-19. The World Health Organization has declared this a pandemic. We need to act appropriately.

Let me reinforce that we have no known or presumptive cases of COVID-19 on campus. We are taking these actions preemptively in order to ensure the safety and well-being of the entire Misericordia community.

1. **The University will cease face-to-face instruction as of 5:00 p.m., Sunday, March 15, 2020**, including those courses taught at Luzerne County Community College. We will have a mini-break from all campus face-to-face classes on Monday and Tuesday, March 16 and 17. On Wednesday, March 18, we will move all classes to online/remote learning.
2. **The University will continue to function and remain open in a modified capacity.** Please note, however, that many events will be postponed or cancelled in the upcoming weeks. See additional information later in this document.
3. Remote instruction will continue at least until the conclusion of Easter Break, which begins on April 9. **We hope to resume on-campus, face-to-face classes on April 14.** We will continue to evaluate the situation and inform you should this date change.
4. All online undergraduate and graduate programs will continue as previously scheduled.
5. We intend to keep **on-campus** clinics open so as to allow students to complete clinical requirements.

I know that students and families, in particular, will have important questions about the decisions we share today. These include academic questions such as how we will support **off-campus** clinical experiences, internships, or research. Please be patient as we work to address these and other questions. You will hear more from the Emergency Preparedness Team in the next few days.

For Students:

6. **All residential buildings will close as of Sunday, March 15, 4:00 p.m.** We recognize that some residential students are not able to travel home. In addition, there will be students who, because of their academic programs, will need to remain on campus. Please contact the Dean of Students Office to request permission to remain on campus.
7. Residential students departing campus should take with them essential items needed to last for at least four weeks, along with any items necessary for carrying on their education remotely from home, including laptops, textbooks, notebooks, critical papers, etc. Students should also plan to carry home valuables and indispensable items (including medications and medical devices) in the event that a sustained period will pass before they can return to campus. Departing students should take emotional support animals with them, as the University cannot be responsible for the care of such animals during this period. Once students depart campus, access to residence halls and classrooms will be restricted until at least April 13.
8. We are consulting with the Middle Atlantic Conferences (MAC) and the NCAA regarding the status of future athletic contests.
9. The University has a limited supply of laptop computers that can be loaned to students who may not have access to a computer at home. Requests for a loaned computer should be directed to the Dean of Students.
10. Advising and online course registration for Fall 2020 courses will be delayed until later in the semester. We will communicate appropriately with students and faculty in order to ensure that this occurs in a timely fashion.
11. Students should expect additional necessary information over the next several days from the Emergency Preparedness Team. Latest information will also be posted on the COVID-19 web page. We encourage you to refer your parents and families to this page as well. See www.misericordia.edu/coronavirus

For Faculty:

12. The Vice President for Academic Affairs is working with the Deans, faculty, and our Office of Teaching and Learning with Technology on training and support resources that will help faculty transition to an online or electronic approach to course delivery.
13. Faculty should expect additional information over the next several days. Deans will also be coordinating support efforts for their college.

For Staff:

14. As noted above, the University will remain functional and open during this timeframe, and staff members should continue to report to work. Staff should observe the previously identified protocols about health and hygiene.
15. Divisional vice presidents will continue to evaluate the potential for critical functions to be accomplished remotely in case further steps are necessary or mandated by government authorities.
16. Employees are encouraged to speak with a representative of the Human Resources Department should you need to request special accommodations related to COVID-19.

Campus Events and Travel:

17. The University has decided to cancel or reschedule all events on campus, including Mass, until April 14 or after. Requests for exceptions should be directed to the appropriate divisional vice president.
18. Enrollment Management is already implementing alternative plans to conduct all key recruiting activities.
19. No decisions have yet been made regarding Commencement, as the situation remains fluid. We assure students who are in their final semester and who were eligible at the beginning of the semester to walk at graduation that they will still be eligible for commencement, whenever and however that occurs. We will keep you updated and will make a decision by Friday, April 3.

The above steps are consistent with new guidance released by the CDC yesterday and available at www.coronavirus.gov. We continue to maintain our own COVID-19 website: www.misericordia.edu/coronavirus. The website provides links to campus communications and resources about COVID-19.

We are appreciative of your patience as we continue to respond to this critical situation.

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