Interoffice Communication

Date: March 12, 2020

To: Provost’s Council
    Academic Department Chairs
    Enrollment Management Leaders
    Dr. Jonathan Sturm, President, Faculty Senate
    Amy Ward, President, Professional and Scientific Council

From: Jonathan Wickert
    Senior Vice President and Provost

Subject: Guidance for Academic Affairs Programs in Response to COVID-19

Thank you for our conversations yesterday regarding Iowa State University’s response to the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) outbreak.

Please broadly and timely share, and discuss, this communication within your colleges, departments, and units.

As announced on March 11, Iowa State University will move all classes online for the two week period (March 23 – April 3) following Spring Break. This decision pertains to lectures, discussion sections, seminars, and similar learning activities conducted in classroom settings.

Laboratories, studios, performance instruction, private applied music or art instruction, computer laboratories, and other hands-on or experiential learning sections will not be held from March 23 – April 3. Substitute assignments or make-up activities during or after that period, including online instruction, should be explored as alternative learning opportunities and made at the discretion of the academic program.

The coming days and weeks will be filled with a multitude of issues, challenges, and questions that will require our prompt attention and – in many cases – our adaptation in order to best serve our students and each other. The decisions we make should be guided by two overarching goals:

1. Protecting the health and safety of faculty, staff, students, and visitors by reducing the transmission risk associated with COVID-19.
2. Ensuring academic continuity so that students continue making progress toward their degrees.
**Implications for Faculty and Staff**
The university remains open for business. Faculty and staff should continue to report to campus unless they are not feeling well, or if otherwise directed. If an employee is ill, they should contact their supervisor and take precautions. Further information, including a list of frequently asked questions from University Human Resources, is available at:  

Faculty, staff, and students should take actions immediately to reduce the risk of community spread of the disease. Actions you should take include:

- Virtualizing meetings
- Limiting face-to-face group meetings to only essential university business
- Reducing the number of attendees in meetings, and
- Holding meetings in larger rooms to provide greater social distancing space (at least 6 feet) between attendees.

In addition, please practice self-care. These actions include:

- Cover your nose and mouth with tissues when you cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing, and use alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth to avoid spreading germs
- Improve your immune system by getting enough rest, exercising, and eating healthy
- Stay home if you are sick, and avoid close contact with those who are sick, and
- Instead of a handshake, use a wave or elbow bump to avoid spreading germs.

**Implications for Instruction**
Instructors should provide students with additional information regarding their classes, assignments, and exams before Monday, March 23.

It is important to remember that many courses will be different when delivered online than when taught face-to-face in a classroom. The content, pedagogical approach, and assignments need not, and in many cases should not, be identical. Faculty may, and in many cases will need to, make appropriate modifications to course syllabi to reflect the current circumstances, while timely informing students of the changes and the rationale. Please be aware of the stress that students are under and offer virtual opportunities for students to ask questions and interact regarding course materials and assignments.

Staff in the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and in the college online learning offices are available to assist faculty with transitioning classes online. Resources are available at CELT’s new COVID-19 webpage:  
https://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/preparing-to-teach/course-continuity/.

Faculty should also consult the online resource *Know Where To Go* for a list of specific individuals and units who are available to provide personal assistance, including live chat and 24/7 telephone support:  
https://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/preparing-to-teach/course-continuity/know-where-to-go-for-help

The College of Veterinary Medicine will develop a protocol for clinical teaching during March 23 – April 6. The Lloyd Veterinary Medical Center, which serves as the university’s teaching
hospital, as well as Veterinary Field Services and the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, will remain open.

To ensure continuity of operations, student support offices (e.g., academic advising, career services, Registrar, Financial Aid) are actively evaluating how best to adjust their services to meet students’ needs. Services will continue to be made available to students in person, online, via phone, and other modes of delivery.

While students are away from campus, they may utilize ISU Extension and Outreach offices, which have high-speed internet connectivity and are located in every Iowa county. Non-resident students may wish to contact their home state’s extension program to find out if they have similar resources.

**Implications for Graduate Education and Postdocs**

Graduate students will receive guidance from the Graduate College and/or Directors of Graduate Education in consultation with department chairs and major professors. Graduate assistants (RAs, TAs and AAs) will maintain their appointments from March 23 – April 3. While supervisors will provide individualized guidance, graduate assistants will maintain normal duties. The duties of TAs will be adjusted as appropriate by supervisors to support the university’s move to online instruction.

Likewise, postdoctoral scholars will maintain their appointments and duties from March 23 – April 3. Further guidance may be provided by the Graduate College in consultation with department chairs and supervisors.

Preliminary and final oral examinations of graduate students qualify as essential university business, consistent with the aforementioned principle of supporting academic continuity of students toward their degrees. These events are scheduled through the Graduate College, which has waived policies that normally limit remote participation. Therefore, virtualizing such meetings should be considered.

**Implications for Research**

Research services and facilities are expected to remain open, and researchers should plan to continue their research, scholarship, and creative activities. The Office of the Vice President for Research is working with colleges to develop specific guidance for continuing research and reducing risks in research settings, and for contingency planning associated with possible curtailment of activities for individual research groups or other services. Information will be shared with colleges and department chairs for distribution to researchers and posted later this week as a link on the homepage of the research office’s website: https://www.research.iastate.edu/.

**Implications for College, Department, and Unit Operations**

On-campus faculty, staff, and administrative searches within the Division of Academic Affairs will be postponed (e.g., in-person finalist interviews) or moved online (e.g., screening interviews) during the period March 23 – April 3. In particular, the remaining on-campus interviews for the Vice President of Research position have been postponed. Hiring managers are responsible for ensuring a consistent experience and opportunity for all candidates with respect to the interview format.
Academic department seminars during March 23 – April 3 should be postponed or moved online. Seminars that some graduate programs schedule in conjunction with final oral examinations or defenses of graduate students should be rescheduled or moved online.

**Implications for Enrollment Management**

Daily campus visit programs managed by the Office of Admissions have been canceled from March 16 – April 5. Experience Iowa State events on March 23, 27, and 28; the new Admitted Student Day on March 30; and Transfer Student Orientation on April 3 have been canceled. International travel, and in some cases domestic travel, by Admissions staff for new student recruitment has been suspended.

Registration for Summer and Fall 2020 classes, which was to begin on March 23, will be postponed so that students have ample time to consult with their advisors. Students and advisors are encouraged to conduct registration appointments electronically via WebEx, e-mail, phone, Canvas, or EAB Navigate. The revised registration start dates are:

- April 2 – College of Veterinary Medicine and Graduate College
- April 3 – Graduate College
- April 6-14 – Seniors
- April 15-20 – Juniors
- April 21-23 – Sophomores
- April 24 - Freshmen

**Implications for Residence, Dining, and Student Affairs**

Students traveling away for spring break are strongly encouraged to remain away during March 23 – April 3. Residence halls and apartments will remain open, but students who wish to remain in university housing through April 3 must register by contacting the Department of Residence. Dining services will be open but may be provided on a limited basis.

Essential services in the Division of Student Affairs such as the Thielen Student Health Center, Student Counseling, and International Students and Scholars Office will be provided through normal operations and via phone as appropriate.

**Implications for Large Gatherings and Campus Events**

In addition to those mentioned above, large gatherings and campus events scheduled during the period of online instruction will be held, postponed, or canceled on a case-by-case basis. A list of current changes and cancellations, consistent with the aforementioned principle of reducing transmission risk, is available at:

[https://web.iastate.edu/safety/updates/covid19/cancellations](https://web.iastate.edu/safety/updates/covid19/cancellations).

Department, college, university, and third-party events between March 13 (tomorrow) and Saturday, April 4 are to be canceled, postponed, or virtualized if the event meets 3 of the following 6 criteria:

1) Is the event expecting 200 or more attendees?
2) Does the venue have size or floor plan limitations that would make social distancing (6 feet between people) impractical?
3) Are you expecting attendees who have traveled from international destinations that may be impacted by travel bans or from countries that have stopped reentry during the duration of the event?
4) Are you expecting attendees whose age and health status categorize them as being in vulnerable populations for COVID-19 infection (e.g., having serious chronic medical conditions or being older adults)?
5) Would an increased housekeeping workload (in response to a COVID-19 outbreak) exceed the capabilities of the venue’s staff?
6) Is the event open to the public and does not require attendees to register?

Domestic travel by Recognized Student Organizations (student led travel) is suspended until April 4. Other university sponsored student domestic travel will be evaluated on a case by case basis and should be reviewed by applicable university departmental leadership.

Next Steps
We are operating in a very dynamic environment, and the COVID-19 situation is being continuously monitored. Delivery of courses through online instruction will be reassessed during the week of March 30, and any changes will be communicated to the campus community at that time. It is important to understand that the online instruction period may be extended, and other actions may need to be taken as the situation evolves. It is possible that changes would be announced with little advance warning.

The university’s Emergency Operations Center has been active since late January, and it is currently addressing many issues including:
• Academic and research continuity
• Human resources
• Semester study abroad programs and students who are currently away
• Summer study abroad programs
• Domestic travel by faculty, staff, and students for university business
• Commencement, New Student Orientation, and other events planned for the spring and summer

Again, thank you for everything you are doing during these unprecedented and challenging times.

JAW/jj

C: Wendy Wintersteen, President
    Pam Cain, Interim Senior Vice President for Operations and Finance
    Martino Harmon, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs
    Michael Newton, Associate Vice President and Chief of Police, and Director of Iowa State University’s Emergency Operations Center