

3/16/2020 11:30am

To the Washington College Community,

I know that there is a lot of anxiety and uncertainty as all of us grapple with the new reality of containing the spread of COVID-19. Responding to a rapidly evolving situation that is disrupting life as we knew it just a few weeks ago, we are doing the very best we can to protect our students, faculty, staff, and visitors, and to fulfill our civic responsibility to limit the impact of COVID-19 on our campus, in our communities, and around the world.

Given these extraordinary circumstances, we did our part to help mitigate the spread of a highly contagious disease by extending Spring Break a second week as faculty began preparations to move much of their coursework online. We are ready to adopt this new paradigm March 23. I had hoped that we could regain a sense of normalcy in a couple of weeks and welcome our students back in early April to complete the remainder of the semester on campus. Unfortunately, this is not to be. As the pandemic grows, the Board leadership concurs with me that **the best course of action now is to offer remote instruction through the remainder of the semester.**

Students

We can only imagine how disappointed you must be to have your college experience disrupted, particularly for seniors who were looking forward to spending their final semester on campus with friends and favorite faculty. While it may seem like the target is always moving, it is too soon to decide about Commencement. We are actively working on contingency plans, and will communicate those plans at the appropriate time.

As a result of the decision to go to remote-only learning for the remainder of the semester, **we are requiring all students now remaining on campus to vacate college housing by March 31.** We understand that this will not be simple for some of our students, and we will work closely with those who need assistance with this process.

We will not be able to accommodate any students returning to campus to pick up belongings until Thursday, March 19. **Please wait for instructions before coming to campus to retrieve belongings so we can focus our efforts on helping those students currently on campus.**

You will receive detailed instructions from Student Affairs in a day or two about a process for moving personal belongings out of the residence halls, as well as storage and shipping options. For those currently on campus, you will also be provided with more information about how we can support you in your move off campus. In those instructions, we will also outline the very limited options for on-campus housing for students who must remain here for health or safety reasons.

Faculty

I am grateful to all of you for your nimbleness and hard work in moving your coursework online. You have been sharing resources and encouraging one another, even while guiding and supporting your students through these tumultuous times. Patrice DiQuinzio, Provost and Dean of the College, will communicate directly with you about further support for your online teaching and will meet today with the Committee on Academic Standing and Advising to discuss adapting some of our policies and deadlines (e.g., for withdrawing from a course) to meet the current situation. Aside from possible changes to deadlines within the semester, the dates for the FY20 academic calendar remain unchanged.

Parents

The financial impact of this decision on the institution is not insignificant. Still, we think it's the right thing to do to compensate you for eligible room and board expenses covering the period from March 23. We will need some time to sort this through. Our business office will calculate those billing adjustments by the end of

the semester. **If you are in a position to do so, please consider donating those funds back to Washington College as a tax-deductible contribution.** We offer our gratitude in advance for your consideration of this request, and will update you with information on how to make this donation shortly.

Staff

As I communicated last week, staff are expected to report to work this week, but should confirm with their supervisors if they have any questions about expectations. In the coming days, we will provide you with a variety of options that may be feasible for your situation. For some, this may be remote work, but we recognize that the work of many staff requires them to be on campus. Specifically, staff play a critical role in helping the College transition to online classes, reducing the residential population on campus, and keeping the College running. We are actively addressing the unique employment considerations and questions across our workforce. The situation is changing rapidly, and HR is reviewing and adjusting workplace policies accordingly. We will issue updates to address the emerging issues and concerns of our staff.

Everyone

What can you do to protect yourself and others? Take everyday preventive steps that are always recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illnesses like colds and flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, your sleeve, or your elbow
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using standard cleaning practices
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- If you are sick, stay home, except when seeking medical care

Stay informed and seek information from reliable, official sources. Be wary of myths, rumors, and misinformation circulating online and elsewhere. Health information shared through social media is frequently inaccurate, unless coming from an official, reliable source such as the CDC, MDH or local health departments. Reliable information can be found at coronavirus.maryland.gov or cdc.gov/coronavirus

Staff

Please observe these measures in your office interactions:

- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Maintain a distance of six feet from others.
- Don't shake hands.
- Hold virtual meetings when possible.
- Find alternatives to non-essential meetings of 25 or more people. Per the CDC's most recent guidance, events of any size should only be continued if they can be carried out with adherence to guidelines for protecting vulnerable populations, hand hygiene, and social distancing.

This public health crisis sheds new light on what it means to be part of the Washington College family. We know this is particularly difficult for students who are far from home, for faculty who are navigating new educational approaches, and for all of us who worry about the health of our families. But this may be our

finest hour. The world will remember how all of us who love Washington College came together in a time of crisis, acting with compassion and generosity.

Be kind to one another. And keep washing your hands. Hopefully, we will see you on campus soon.

Yours,
Kurt

IMPORTANT DATES

March 23 Remote Instruction Begins
March 31 Final Day for Residence Hall Move-Out