

Dear campus community,

Bridgewater State University continues to closely monitor the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Massachusetts, the United States and overseas and to take proactive measures to minimize any risk to the BSU community. The BSU COVID-19 planning and response team is meeting regularly to assess the situation and plan accordingly.

I must reiterate that there are **no known cases of COVID-19 among our students, faculty and staff** on campus or among those studying or working abroad. As Governor Charlie Baker indicated in his press conference yesterday, there are currently no cases of COVID-19 in Plymouth, Bristol and Barnstable counties, although the situation is very fluid.

Nonetheless, in light of the spread of the virus and the impact already being felt on college campuses across the country, BSU is engaged in intensive planning to ensure the continuity of education in the event that we need to shift to an exclusively online format for classes when possible.

Action Steps:

Although the risk to those on campus remains low, given the ongoing spread of the virus in our state and elsewhere, we are now escalating our institutional response to protect our entire community – students, staff, faculty and community members who visit our campus. BSU is adopting the following additional action steps to protect our campus community:

1. We are **cancelling classes for the week of Monday, March 16 through Friday, March 20. CLASSES ARE EXPECTED TO RESUME MONDAY, MARCH 23.** This extension will permit the university to complete our planning in the event BSU needs to move to an online format for conducting most of our classes, and to thoroughly clean all interior areas of the campus. For students, this extension will not impact the completion of courses or credits earned.

Residence halls are currently closed for Spring Break and will remain closed until March 22 at 9:00 a.m. Resident students' Connect Card access to the residential facilities will remain disabled until 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 22. If you need to access your residence hall room during this period or if the closing of residence halls presents a hardship to you, please go to the Office of Residence Life and Housing website at www.bridgew.edu/rlh for more information and updates or contact the main office at 508-531-1277 or ResLife@bridgew.edu.
2. Following Governor Baker's directive issued March 10, BSU is hereby **suspending all university-sanctioned domestic (i.e., interstate) and foreign travel** by all members of the campus community for the next 30 days (through April 10, 2020). We will reevaluate this decision within the next month. We are **strongly discouraging students and employees from all unnecessary personal travel – domestic (i.e., interstate) and foreign.**
3. We are **requesting all BSU students, faculty and staff returning from international travel, whether professional or personal, or travel that may have resulted in heightened exposure to**

COVID-19 to complete this [BSU Travel Self-Report form](#) at least 48 hours before your return to/arrival on campus.

4. We are **requesting all BSU students, faculty and staff returning from travel, whether professional or personal, from a country designated by the CDC as Level 2 or 3 to self-isolate** using guidance from the Bridgewater State University Wellness Center. Most self-isolations will last 14 days.

Self-isolation can sound frightening until you realize that the procedure is very similar to what you have probably always done when you have a cold, stomach bug or just feel sick.

Limit your exposure to other people and practice the best versions of all your usual hygiene routines. For students who are self-isolating at home, our nurse practitioners in the Wellness Center will reach out to you to answer any questions you might have regarding self-isolation. They will stay in communication with you during your 14-day self-isolation and provide any assistance that you might need with health-related questions or concerns. If you have health questions, you can contact the Wellness Center at 508-531-1252 or wellnesscenter@bridgew.edu.

For employees, Wellness Center staff are available to answer health-related questions and direct you to resources. Employees are encouraged to contact staff in Human Resources and Talent Management at 508-531-1324 to assist you with any questions during the self-isolation period.

5. Based on Governor Baker's directive, we are **reviewing all BSU-hosted events, conferences, seminars and other discretionary gatherings involving external parties coming to campus and will make cancellation decisions on case-by-case basis for the next 30 days**. BSU's Office of University Events will be contacting all parties with events, conferences and other gatherings planned on campus during this period.
6. Following the governor's guidance, all regular internal business shall continue. However, **employees are encouraged to consider changes to normal work routines such as** utilizing alternatives such as conference calls, Skype and other group communication tools in lieu of in-person meetings. Employees are encouraged to desist from shaking hands and to consider employing "social distancing" practices such as sitting six feet apart in cases where there are necessary in-person meetings.

Additionally, employees should **not attend external work-related conferences, seminars or events**.

7. **We will provide additional guidance to faculty and staff in a follow-up e-mail which will be sent by tomorrow**. For now, BSU operations will continue as normal and faculty and staff should plan to report to work next week unless they are sick or directed otherwise over the next few days.

Aiming to Reduce Risk for All of Us:

BSU has developed a [COVID-19 webpage](#) to provide the university with current information and resources related to the COVID-19.

The University also has taken several proactive measures to reduce the transmission of germs, including:

- Installing 18 hand sanitizer stations at each residence hall and apartment entry and planning to install an additional 90 hand sanitizer stations across campus.
- Augmenting our cleaning regimen by utilizing electrostatic sprayers to disinfect spaces, including residence halls, classrooms, restrooms, police cruisers and transit buses.
- Providing additional cleaning of high touch points and surfaces.
- Placing across campus 150 Massachusetts Department of Public Health posters with tips for reducing the transmission of germs.
- Soliciting the community's assistance in notifying Facilities Management (508-531-1296) if sanitizers or soap dispensers are low or empty.

The CDC recommends that you use the same reasonable precautions you would employ to help prevent colds and the flu in order to maintain your health and prevent the spread of all respiratory conditions, including:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in the trash.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick and staying home when you are sick, and
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- It is not too late to get a flu shot if you haven't already.

Understandably, the COVID-19 outbreak has caused heightened levels of anxiety. However, I am completely confident we can meet this challenge together if we temper fear with reason, panic with patience and uncertainty with education in the best spirit of compassion for others.

Sincerely yours,

Frederick W. Clark Jr., Esq.
President