

To the campus community,

As you are aware, the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to evolve quickly in the U.S. and abroad, with new information and new cases confirmed daily. Late yesterday, Governor Charlie Baker [declared](#) a state of emergency in Massachusetts based on the evolving conditions. We are continuing to monitor and respond to these developments with guidance from state and federal officials, including the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#). In the face of this rapidly developing global health emergency, our highest priority remains the health and welfare of our students, faculty and staff. While Fitchburg State has received no confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 infection, we need to act now to slow the spread of the virus. To further that goal, we are preparing and planning for the possibility of temporarily delivering course material remotely for all face-to-face courses. Therefore, we are going to cancel classes until **Monday, March 23** (except for [accelerated online programs](#)). Students should not return to campus the week of March 16-20. Residence halls will be closed for that week. Housing and Residential Services will be in contact with resident students about their needs for housing - or access to their residence halls - during the residence hall closure. The campus will otherwise remain open and all faculty and staff should continue their regular work schedules the week of March 16-20. The break will also allow additional time to clean all frequently touched surfaces and common areas on campus. Additional communications will be sent in the coming days as the university plans for continuity of operations. Please visit fitchburgstate.edu/coronavirus for updated information. In addition, the following conditions are in effect for at least 30 days and will be revisited in the coming weeks.

- We will be surveying students, faculty and staff about their travel over the break. Anyone who has traveled to areas considered at high risk of COVID-19 will be asked to self-isolate before returning to the main campus, and to contact their primary healthcare providers should they develop symptoms (such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath).
- All work-related travel, both foreign and domestic, is to be discontinued until further notice. Study abroad travels have already been canceled or postponed. For conferences, consider virtual options. Out-of-state visitors, including guest speakers or job candidates, should be moved to online forums.
- We are canceling or postponing large gatherings on the campus (currently defined as those having 100 or more attendees). We will revisit large gatherings in the coming weeks based on evolving conditions and guidance from state and national authorities.

We do not take these measures lightly, and we wish they were not necessary. Our goal

is to keep members of our community safe while ensuring that students can complete their coursework for the semester and the daily operations of the institution can continue.

I assure you that the university's leadership is closely monitoring developments related to COVID-19 and we are in constant contact with healthcare providers, state government, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

We will continue to provide all of you with details on how we will move forward. We know these decisions are disruptive, but are necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Please visit fitchburgstate.edu/coronavirus to be kept apprised of the latest information, as well as tips on prevention.

Sincerely,

Richard S. Lapidus
President

Colleagues,

As you are now aware, the disruption associated with the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to grow and has a potential to impact our campus.

As already announced, all classes, other than those associated with our accelerated programs, have been cancelled for next week. Please keep in mind that the cancellation of classes next week is to assist in planning and to limit crowding as we plan, not for any immediate health concern. This means that all online classes that are not accelerated should be cancelled for next week. However, internships, student teaching and clinicals should continue, as long as the sites remain open. The priority next week is planning, so there will be faculty meetings and trainings on campus to get prepared for delivering class materials remotely, beyond next week. For those purposes, all planned campus community events will be cancelled next week.

The first step to the planning is for you to complete a survey that can be found at the following link, <https://forms.gle/dwUo7unR2VXvVTTL6> This survey will allow us to plan for what support is needed in order to deliver course material remotely.

The second step will be a meeting of the Academic Affairs leadership with Department Chairs and Graduate Chairs Monday of next week. We will be asking chairs to be in touch to set up a time and process for your department to meet and plan for remote delivery at the departmental level.

The third step is for you to consider attending a training that will be made available next week-- Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday-- to assist you with delivering courses remotely (that schedule will be sent out by the end of the week). This training will be for the delivery of materials synchronously or asynchronously, through Blackboard, Google hangouts, video lectures, emailed exercises, etc.

The ten-question survey seeking information from faculty members as to their ability and the feasibility of delivering course material remotely.

We ask that you respond to these questions assuming a disruption of 1-2 weeks.

The survey is due **Friday, March 13, at 4:30 pm.**

The information collected is for the sole purpose of planning for the current emergency related to the COVID-19 associated closure of the university.

As I am sure you understand, these are unprecedented circumstances, so we ask for your patience and assistance. I am certain that there will be questions. If you have any academic questions, please forward those to your dean(s).

Alberto