

Good Evening:

Earlier today, Governor Baker held a press conference declaring a state of emergency as a result of the COVID-19 coronavirus.

As of March 10, 2020, there were seven presumptive positive COVID-19 (Coronavirus) cases in Berkshire County, and 92 total presumptive cases statewide, 70 of the 92 cases are associated with attendance at the Biogen conference in Boston.

**As a result of Governor Baker's declaration of a state of emergency and out of an abundance of caution, MCLA will extend Spring Break for an additional week, resuming classes on Monday, March 30.** Students will need to leave residence areas by 7 p.m. on Friday, March 13 and may return to campus on Sunday, March 29. Campus offices will remain open throughout the Spring Break.

This decision allows the College additional time to clean all frequently touched surfaces and common areas in all of our facilities including the residence areas. Moreover, this additional time allows me to work with my colleagues to organize a coordinated campus response to COVID-19.

Regarding the delivery of courses: MCLA classes will resume on March 30. We are not currently considering completing the semester through the use of online courses other than what is already being taught online. It is possible that in the future, depending on the status of the coronavirus, we will explore with our faculty colleagues the possibility of teaching predominantly in an online environment. It is unlikely that will happen this semester.

**Based on the Governor's guidance, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Commissioner, Carlos Santiago, has strongly encouraged state universities to take the following measures:**

- All international and domestic travel for faculty, staff, and students has been canceled for the next 30 days. This means that athletic teams and campus clubs and organizations will not travel over Spring Break, as previously scheduled. Additionally, faculty and staff cannot travel for conferences or meetings, although they may participate in meetings if they are held remotely or virtually.
- Students will not be allowed to remain in the residence areas and access cards will be turned off in Hoosac Hall and the Berkshire Towers. Residents of the Flagg Townhouses will turn in their keys before leaving for break. A petition will be available to resident students on March 11 for those who need to remain in residence over Spring Break due to extraordinary situations. Resident students will receive more detailed direction tomorrow from Residential Programs and Services.

I assure you that the executive staff of the College and the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) are closely monitoring developments related to COVID-19 and we are in regular communication with healthcare providers, state government, and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH).

We will continue to provide you with more details on how we will move forward in the coming weeks. I know these decisions can be inconvenient for all of us, however these actions are necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The goal is to make decisions that are focused on what is best for the health of our community, and to have minimal disruption to student education. We will continue to track alerts regarding COVID-19 and share news and information with you as it becomes available.

We have alerted all students that if they have questions related to COVID-19 or general illness, they should not hesitate to contact MCLA Health Services at 413.662.5421 or [healthservices@mcla.edu](mailto:healthservices@mcla.edu) and ask to speak with someone about their symptoms. If employees of the College are concerned about symptoms they have, then they should contact their health care provider and inform the Human Resources Office at 413.662.5596. Students and other community members are also encouraged to read this helpful [Fact Sheet](#) on the coronavirus from the MDPH.

We continue to urge the campus community to follow some simple but effective illness prevention measures regardless of your location:

- It is not too late to get a seasonal flu vaccine. (Call your primary care provider or stop by any pharmacy as many now offer flu shots.)
- Cover coughs and sneezes in your elbow or sleeve.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you feel unwell, stay at home in order to protect yourself and other people.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading any virus to others, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Disinfecting commonly touched surfaces is suggested.
- A list of additional locations of hand sanitation on campus can be found [here](#).

It is my hope that you have a restful and healthy spring break.

Sincerely,

JB

TO: All Faculty

FROM: Adrienne Wootters, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Ely Janis, Dean of Academic Affairs

DATE: March 11, 2020

We are reaching out to you to provide further direction over the next two weeks, as classes have been suspended for an additional week beyond Spring Break.

You can expect nearly-certain disruption in your classes in the final weeks of this semester. Some of your students may get sick and/or need to self-quarantine. Students who get sick over break will be asked to stay home until they are non-infectious. Additionally, it is not impossible that you yourselves will get sick or need to self-quarantine.

To that end, we are asking all faculty to determine a plan for how they will be able to ensure that students who are not able to attend their classes can finish the course successfully as well as a plan for how to finish out their courses should they get sick or need to self-quarantine. Please present a written plan to your department chair and Academic Affairs detailing how you intend to communicate with students, how you intend to receive assignments, and how you intend to administer exams. Please share your plans with your department chair and Academic Affairs, using this online form, by Friday, March 27th.

We recognize that adjusting a course mid-semester to accommodate remote learning is a tough job, and many of you will need some assistance moving towards using online tools to complete your course plans. During the week of March 23-27, CTL and Academic Affairs will offer a series of workshops on Canvas tools and pedagogical best practices for distance learning. We will also have classrooms dedicated for faculty use to develop online content including videos and audio of lecture material in Bowman Hall. Additionally, the Library staff will be available to work with faculty members in sourcing and uploading materials.

Plan on being on campus that week—these important workshops will be task-oriented; you will be able to work on your individual courses with experts in the room. We will be planning this important week of professional development in the coming days, and you can expect a schedule of workshops and a chance to sign up for individual help by the middle of next week.

We understand that some courses have experiential components that are difficult to address in a remote format (such as labs, studio art, etc.). With that in mind, please use the extended spring break to consider possible alternative modalities. Having said that, we recognize that this will be challenging, and you may not be able to address all the outcomes of those courses. Erin Milne will be on campus during the second week to assist you with adjusting your learning outcomes.

In order to help us craft workshops and support services that will be most useful to you, please fill out the following online survey and read the [Readiness Guide for Faculty](#). The [Digital Resiliency Survey](#) will tell us what tools you have that will enable you to teach remotely . Please take this survey in the next few days—it will only take a few minutes. Part of the survey is also to determine your upload/download rate at home, [so please take the survey at home](#).

**Please Note:** The links above are accessible only with an MCLA A#. Faculty should be sure to first log in to the Portal and MCLA email, and then click the links above. Please contact the Help Desk if you have difficulty using these links.

**In summary, we are asking you to:**

1. Inform your department chair and Academic Affairs (link above) of **your plan** to ensure student success should they or you need to be out of the classroom for an extended period
2. Fill out the **Digital Resiliency Survey** (link above) from your remote teaching location.
3. Read the **Readiness Guide for Faculty** (link above).
4. Attend professional development workshops **March 23 – 27** to facilitate remote learning.