

Dear Campus Community:

Along with all of you, I have been observing various sources indicating the rapidly changing Coronavirus (COVID-19) status in Massachusetts over the last several days. The other Massachusetts state university presidents and I have been communicating often and coordinating our anticipated responses to this public health issue.

For their efforts at Westfield State, I want to thank our Health Services staff, as well as the Coronavirus Management Team of the University's Emergency Response Team, for closely monitoring the situation over the last several weeks, and specifically over the last few days, to keep us well informed and on pace with our contingency planning and preparation.

It is important to note that there are no reported cases of the Coronavirus on the Westfield State University campus, and no student or employee to our knowledge has been tested or is awaiting test results.

However, in the interest of maintaining a clean and safe environment for our students and employees, Westfield State University will **cancel on-ground academic courses/classes** (on-line courses continue as scheduled) for the week of **March 16-20, 2020**. Additionally, Westfield State will conduct **all classes exclusively on-line for the week of March 23-27, 2020**. The decision to delay students' return to campus is in line with that of our peer Massachusetts state universities.

During the weeks of March 16 and 23, 2020 all other University operations will continue. A determination will be made about Athletics and other campus events soon.

Pending further direction from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker and his administration, we anticipate resuming on-ground teaching on Monday, March 30, 2020 and re-opening residence halls to coincide with that.

We realize these changes pose many questions and require flexibility from students, faculty, and staff.

Following my message today, more detailed information will follow:

- Residential Life will be in contact with those resident students with specific and unique housing needs to ensure those needs are met. Further, detailed instruction and information will be sent in a separate email to all residential students on Thursday, March 12 by noon. This communication will contain information on when residence halls will temporarily open for students to obtain their academic materials.
- Faculty and staff should plan to use the remainder of this week and all of next to continue to plan for the alternate teaching modalities and the continuity of student support services for the week of March 23. Further detailed instruction and information will be sent later today, March 11, to Academic Affairs faculty and staff on this matter.

- In addition, faculty and staff should expect from Office of Human Resources, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity a comprehensive email by Friday, March 13, on personnel issues related to this plan. Included in that communication will be instructions for returning employees who have traveled over the Spring Break.

The following are guidelines set forth by Gov. Baker yesterday. Westfield State asks for adherence to the following protocols given the current status of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

1. Work-related travel, both international and domestic, should be discontinued until further notice. Personal international travel is also discouraged.
2. Conferences, seminars, and other discretionary gatherings, scheduled and hosted by Westfield State involving external parties will be assessed to either be held virtually or cancelled. Internal business meetings should continue, but organizers should consider web or phone-based engagement, if possible.
3. Faculty and staff should not attend external work-related conferences, seminars, or events in-person, but are asked to participate remotely.
4. Faculty and staff feeling ill with fever or flu symptoms should not come into work. Also, faculty and staff who are among the highest risk population for COVID-19—older adults and individuals with serious medical conditions—are asked to speak with their supervisors to review possible alternative work assignments.

We will await further guidance from the Baker administration following its re-assessment of these guidelines within 30 days, as mentioned at yesterday's press conference and noted in the corresponding [press release](#) posted on mass.gov.

We appreciate everyone's cooperation and diligence as we work together on this solution and potentially future measures to ensure the well-being and safety of our students and workforce.

As unsettling as the news of the spread of COVID-19 may be, know that Westfield State University is in close collaboration with local and statewide officials on this important public health matter and will continue to act in the best interest of the students we serve and the faculty and staff we employ.

All updates and current information will continue to be available on Westfield State's [Coronavirus Update webpage](#).

Be well,

Ramon S. Torrecilha, Ph.D.
President

Dear Faculty and Staff,

As you are all aware from the message earlier today, Westfield State will extend the Spring Break period for students, suspending all on ground classes for the week of March 16-20. During the week of March 23-27, we are asking for all coursework to be conducted remotely, in an effort to provide time for cleaning and to support mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

We recognize that this is a challenge for some and is a particular challenge for those engaged in experiential learning activities, but we must all do our best to be flexible in this uncharted territory.

Teaching and Learning

Under the leadership of Dean Tom Raffensperger, the staff in the Center for Instructional Technology, Technology Support, and Media Services have been working on the implementation of a continuity plan to support remote teaching and learning. The webpage for CIT is now hosting general advice and resource links <http://www.westfield.ma.edu/cit/teaching-remotely-getting-started-and-resources/>. The university has also purchased increased data storage to accommodate expansion of campus use of PLATO (Blackboard).

In addition, during the week of March 16-20, Technology Support will offer in-person workshops in:

- Library resources for remote instruction and learning
- Using Zoom for instruction and meetings
- Supporting student technology needs
- Getting on PLATO (Blackboard)
- Open hands-on help session for supporting remote instruction

Details and registration information will be coming soon.

Because so many institutions are moving in this same direction, there is a plethora of resources available in addition to our campus resources. I know some of you have been discussing this issue with departmental colleagues and/or on discipline-based listservs and websites. I thank you for this work and encourage you to find the options that will best accommodate your course content and pedagogy and to share those with your colleagues.

Advising and Registration

We will continue with our scheduled academic advising and registration dates. Advising appointments scheduled between March 16 and March 27 should be conducted via telephone or if need be, via email. In either case, as a best practice and given the unusual circumstances, please keep some written record of the course recommendations made to students and place those in their advising file in the academic department. We are working on an electronic version of the course scheduling form and this will be distributed as soon as it is ready.

Support

All university offices/departments will remain open and function as usual. I have asked the college deans to work directly with academic department chairs and with you to provide the necessary support as needed. While staff on campus will be available to assist with technology needs and training, I ask that faculty and staff work with each other to manage discipline-specific or office-specific issues utilizing resources available to you. Please contact your dean with questions regarding support needed to activate or access materials you may find.

Please note that a separate communication from Student Affairs/Academic Affairs will be sent to students. If you receive questions from your students unrelated to academic issues, please be sure to forward those to your college dean, who will triage those inquiries to the appropriate campus representative. Please note that support for students with technology resource challenges can be found on the CIT webpage (<http://www.westfield.ma.edu/cit/teaching-remotely-getting-started-and-resources/>).

There will be many questions as we move ahead. We will use the remainder of this week and next to begin to sort out some of these issues. I thank you for input, flexibility, and patience during this time.

Again, I recognize that these are challenging circumstances and that beyond our workplace, we have personal concerns for family and friends. Within this context, I know that we all do the very best we can to support each other and our students.

Thank you,

Diane