

COVID-19 Update Message from Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.

TO: University Community

FROM: Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.

SUBJECT: University Will Cease Face-to-Face Instruction

Dear Members of the University Community,

Over the past several weeks, the University's Incident Management Team and the President's Cabinet have monitored carefully the worldwide spread of COVID-19. According to the Centers for Disease Control, "For most people, the immediate risk of being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low. ...It's likely that at some point, widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the United States will occur."

In Pennsylvania, for example, cases are now reported outside of Philadelphia and in nearby Monroe and Wayne counties. **There are still no reported cases on campus or in Lackawanna County.** While we don't know how quickly the virus will spread in the coming weeks, additional cases in Northeastern Pennsylvania now seem likely.

The health and safety of our students, staff and faculty are our top priority. Benefitting from consultation with campus leaders and with input from the President's Cabinet, **I have decided the following:**

- **The University will cease face-to-face instruction and move classes remotely beginning on Monday, March 30, 2020.**
- This decision extends Spring Break by one week for students only to provide faculty time to complete preparations already under way.
- **Remote instruction will continue at least until the conclusion of Easter Break, which begins on April 9. We hope to resume on-campus classes on April 14.** We will continue to evaluate the situation and inform you should this date change.

- Current online graduate programs will continue as previously scheduled.

I know that students and families, in particular, will have important questions about the decisions we share today. These include academic questions such as how we will support clinical experiences, internships or research. **Please be patient as we work to address these and other questions.** You will hear more from us during break next week.

For now, I can offer the following:

Students

- Students should bring with them all course materials and books necessary to continue their studies remotely when leaving for break.
- **All Residence Halls will now close as of Friday, March 13, at 8 p.m. for the extended Spring Break.** As Residence Life has already communicated, we recognize that some residential students are not able to travel home and a process is in place for these students to request permission to remain on campus during break.
- The University has a limited supply of laptop computers that can be loaned to students who may not have access to a computer at home. Requests should be directed to the Technology Support Center by phone at 570-941-4357 or by email at techsupport@scranton.edu.
- Online course registration will proceed as scheduled. Students will be asked to consult virtually with your faculty advisors prior to registration.
- Students should expect additional information today from Robert Davis, Ed.D., Vice President for Student Life.

Faculty

- Jeff Gingerich, Ph.D., Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, is working with the CTLE, the Deans, faculty and our Information Technology team on training and support resources that will help faculty transition to an online or electronic approach to course delivery.
- Faculty advisors will be asked to support students virtually so that online course registration can proceed as previously scheduled.
- Faculty should expect additional information from Dr. Gingerich later today. Deans will also be coordinating support efforts for their college or school.

Staff

- As noted above, the University will remain open during this timeframe, and staff members should continue to report to work.
- Divisional vice presidents will continue to evaluate the potential for critical functions to be accomplished remotely in case further steps are necessary or mandated by government authorities.
- You are encouraged to speak with your supervisor and Human Resources about any special concerns you may have related to COVID-19.
- Members of the staff should expect additional information today from Patricia Tetreault, Vice President for Human Resources.

Campus Events and Travel

- The University has decided **to cancel all events on campus of 50 or more people until April 14**. Requests for exceptions should be directed to the applicable divisional vice president.
- **Shamrockin' Eve on Friday, March 13, is cancelled**. As noted above, all residence halls will close on Friday, March 13, at 8 p.m. **All students should return home on Friday**, except those who have received permission from Residence Life to remain on campus for spring break. **We especially discourage students from remaining in Scranton to participate in official and unofficial activities related to the St. Patrick's Day Parade.**

- **Enrollment Management is already implementing plans to conduct key recruiting events virtually, including Preview Day for Accepted Students on March 28.** Some of you are already assisting with this process.
- We are consulting with the Landmark Conference and the NCAA regarding the status of future athletic contests but have canceled all Spring Break Athletics Trips.
- Finally, we have canceled service trips during Spring Break and suspended service programs in the region, recognizing that many sites have already cancelled volunteer participation.

The above steps are consistent with new guidance released by the CDC yesterday and available at [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov). We continue to maintain our own COVID-19 website: www.scranton.edu/covid-19. The website provides links to campus communications and resources about COVID-19. You can also email healthandsafety@scranton.edu with any questions or concerns.

Our Response Must be Grounded in Our Mission

As we implement these unprecedented measures, we must do so in a way that is grounded in our mission and in the commitment to community that defines and distinguishes us. We are here to educate our students and to help them achieve their goals and aspirations. We must, therefore, ensure that we support our students above all, especially those completing their undergraduate or graduate studies in May.

While I hope that these campus-wide decisions will guide us through these uncertain times, the true strength of our response will come from faculty members finding innovative ways to teach even if the classroom is no longer an option, from staff members accomplishing critical work that supports our students no matter where they are, from students challenging themselves to engage their coursework in different ways, and from all of us staying home and seeking medical help should we experience flu-like symptoms. In short, the strength of our response will come from how well we care for each other.

When it comes to caring and concern, I could not think of a place better suited to work through these present difficulties than The University of Scranton.

Let us all remember in prayer those afflicted by the virus or affected by the disruption it has caused. God bless and keep you all, and God bless The University of Scranton.

Sincerely,

Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.
President