



March 26, 2020

Dear Members of the University Community,

Let me begin by expressing my sincere hope that this email finds you and your families well. I pray for the wellbeing of the University community every day and for all those affected by COVID-19, especially those who are suffering or have lost their lives. As promised in our campus update on Monday, I am writing to you today about plans for after Easter Break on April 14, including the status of campus-based instruction, campus access and Commencement.

Plans for After April 14 and the Status of Campus-Based Instruction

When I wrote you on March 11 regarding the move to remote education, I shared our hope that the University could return to campus-based instruction after Easter Break on April 14. **We have concluded that it will be necessary to continue remote education through the end of the spring semester.**

We withheld making this decision hoping it would not be necessary. The state and national situation, however, remains uncertain, and we must give faculty and staff time to prepare for remote instruction that will now continue through the remainder of the semester.

Students enrolled in online master's programs are not affected by this change. These programs will continue on their normal schedule.

I have asked Jeff Gingerich, Ph.D., Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, to write separately to you all next week with additional details about remote education.

Campus Closure and Access for Residential Students

The campus is closed until further notice as per directives from Pennsylvania's Governor and Department of Education. **University offices continue to work remotely and will reopen on campus when possible.**

Students will not have access to campus buildings during closure, except for limited access for residential students who received permission to remain on campus.

Residential students will understandably want to know when they can retrieve personal belongings. Right now, we are advised that students should only ask to retrieve essential items, such as medication. Students needing essential items should contact Residence Life by email at res-life@scranton.edu or by phone at 570-941-6226. Robert Davis Jr. Ed.D., Vice President for Student Life, will share specific instructions for all residential students regarding when and how they can return for their personal items as soon as our campus situation is more clear.

I will be writing tomorrow to residential and meal-plan students about the status of room and board charges already paid for the spring semester.

Commencement

Since the COVID-19 outbreak began disrupting campus life, the University community has been especially concerned about the impact on undergraduate and graduate students completing their degrees. The status of Commencement weekend is among the most common questions we have received from students and families.

We have NOT yet decided to cancel Commencement Weekend events for May 30-31. Our ceremony is later than most schools, and we want to wait as long as possible before deciding whether or not conditions will require us to change our current plans. Similarly, we have not yet cancelled Senior Week Events during the week of May 25. **We will notify students and families of the status of Senior Week and Commencement Weekend no later than Monday, May 11.**

At the same time, we believe it is important to have **a contingency plan in place.** For this reason, **we have identified the weekend of October 24-25 as a fallback date should we need to change our plans for May.**

We have already reserved the Mohegan Sun Arena at Casey Plaza for a ceremony on either May 31 or October 25 and are grateful to the Arena for their flexibility. We encourage families to plan for both possibilities in terms of hotel arrangements.

Once again, Dr. Gingerich will be writing to graduating students and families with additional information in the coming weeks.

As always, you can find the most up-to-date information at scranton.edu/COVID-19.

I have said before that the decisions I have had to make these past few weeks to shift to remote education and to close campus are among the most difficult of my presidency. In large ways and small, however, I am so encouraged by the way the Scranton family is caring for each other through these uncertain times. In sharing our decisions today, we hope to bring what clarity we can to our students, faculty, staff and parents.

Please know that you remain in my thoughts and prayers and that together I have no doubt that our community will emerge more united. I leave you now with [words shared this week by Father General Arturo Sosa, S.J.](#):

We don't know how long this stretch of the road is or what will follow after. So let us ask for light to see the way forward and the grace that we need to work as brothers and sisters in solidarity with the whole of humanity and with the planet on which we live.

May the Lord bless and keep us. We walk this journey together. Amen

May God bless The University of Scranton.

Sincerely,

Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.