

**Subject:** A message from the President regarding COVID-19

**Date:** Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 4:32:03 PM Eastern Daylight Time

**From:** Anna Billingsley (abilling)

**To:** Anna Billingsley (abilling)

**Priority:** High

To the campus community:

I am writing to share important information about the University's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. In recent days, the University's Emergency Operations Team has been closely monitoring the situation and has been working to plan and prepare for possible disruptions to our operations. We have consulted with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), the Governor's Office, local officials, and our colleagues in higher education around the Commonwealth and beyond. Though we have no known cases of infection among members of the University community, the virus' spread across the mid-Atlantic region is continuing and it is likely that this will be the case for some time.

In this challenging time, we appreciate your positivity and cooperation as we try, first and foremost, to ensure the safety and well-being of our campus community. Equally important is our commitment to keeping all students on track to complete their course work for the semester and maintain progress towards graduation. We realize that the virus, as well as the uncertainty of what lies ahead, may cause heightened anxiety across our campus community. Your concerns are understandable, and we will continue to communicate with you as frequently as possible to give you accurate and current information.

Based on the latest guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the VDH, we will immediately initiate a series of steps designed to mitigate the risk of transmission. The goal of these efforts is to promote social distancing by minimizing gatherings in which members of the community spend long periods of time in close proximity. We know from public health officials that this step is essential to help slow the spread of the virus in the United States.

First, **all classes will be cancelled this Thursday, March 12, and Friday, March 13.** This will provide faculty and staff an opportunity to virtualize instruction and prepare to move teaching and learning online and to alternate formats beginning next week. All in-person class meetings will be suspended and instruction will be moving to online and alternate learning options for a three-week period beginning on **Monday, March 16**, and continuing through **Friday, April 3**, pending further developments.

Provost Nina Mikhalevsky will soon provide faculty with additional information in support of this effort. The University will continue to monitor the situation and will make appropriate adjustments as necessary to the timetable outlined above.

Let me be clear: the University will remain open with operations and services continuing with minimal interruptions.

While all in-person classes are being moved online and to alternate learning approaches, this will allow residential students to depart the campus. All residential students are strongly urged to return home by the end of this weekend. The Office of Residence Life & Housing will be available to work with and support students during this transition and Vice President Juliette Landphair will be sharing additional information with all students shortly.

To further ensure the health and safety of members of the University and local communities, we will

also limit gatherings and travel during this critical time period. Effective tomorrow, all University events and programs, as well as all other events scheduled for the Fredericksburg and Stafford campuses, are cancelled through April 6. Varsity athletic conference competition will continue while we work with athletic conference partners and the NCAA.

Further, all University-sponsored international travel is suspended until at least May 15. All members of the UMW community are strongly encouraged to exercise caution in domestic University-related and personal travel. Further guidance about travel will be provided in a follow-up communication from Vice President for Administration and Finance Paul Messplay.

In taking these actions, our goal is to ensure the health and safety of the University community while maintaining the continuity of our academic programs so that students remain on track to complete the semester and, in the case of our graduating students, to receive their degrees.

While we hope that we will be able to return to in-person classes at the beginning of April, we must also understand that this may not be possible. We will update you as events warrant for this very fluid and rapidly evolving situation.

Please also continue our tradition of care for one another. We encourage you to acknowledge the hard work of the people working in residence halls, facilities, services, and classrooms as they prioritize student learning and the safety of all members of our community. In keeping with [ASPIRE](#), UMW is committed to creating an environment that supports the wellbeing of all students, faculty, and staff with all members of the community being treated with dignity and respect.

Thank you for your help and leadership as we work collaboratively to face COVID 19 as a united community and take steps to respond in this complex situation.

Troy

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