



**SOUTHEAST MISSOURI**  
STATE UNIVERSITY · 1873

Office of the President

**TO: University Stakeholders**  
**FROM: Carlos Vargas, President**  
**DATE: March 10, 2020**  
**RE: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Preparedness Update**

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To help inform and update the University community on actions taken to address COVID-19 (coronavirus), we are providing the following information, which is current as of March 10, 2020.

### **1. Campus Advisories**

- January 24, 2020: Executive Staff began discussing university sponsored/affiliated traveled in regard to COVID-19 making the decision at that time not to approve summer study abroad in China due to the outbreak.
- January 29, 2020: President Vargas issued first campus advisory regarding COVID-19
- February 10, 2020: Campus alert/communication issued regarding flu prevention and providing resources to educate individuals on minimizing exposure.
- March 4, 2020: President Vargas issued second campus advisory regarding COVID-19 and announcing travel restrictions to CDC level 3 countries – China, Iran, Italy and South Korea.
- March 6, 2020: The Office of International Education Services contacted all students currently studying abroad notifying them of the University’s attention to COVID-19 and offering to support those wishing to return early. All requests will be evaluated and handled on a case-by-case basis (9 countries, 21 students).
- March 9, 2020: An informational webpage was launched providing copies of the campus advisories issued to date, including travel and other related recommendations and information, and linking to resources from various agencies and organizations.

### **2. Campus Engagement**

- Conversations are on-going with a small group of University leaders that President Vargas is convening on a routine basis (for example, President Vargas has facilitated 4 meetings on this topic in the last week alone. Membership includes President Vargas, Provost Godard, Kathy Mangels, Dr. Debbie Below, Chris Martin, Ann Hayes, Dr. Bruce Skinner, Dr. Kevin Timlin and Jeremy Gray.)

- In early February, University leaders held a meeting at Southeast with Cape Girardeau County Public Health leaders to discuss coronavirus, flu season and measures being put in place, including stepped up cleaning of high-touch areas on campus. Campus leaders have continued participation in conversations as members of a local Task Force consisting of representatives from public health, public information, emergency management and other sectors in Cape Girardeau and the southeast Missouri region. The last meeting was held February 27.
- Campus leaders have been engaged with state leaders regarding this topic, hearing updates from the Commissioner of Higher Education, Emergency Management officials, and the Governor.

### **3. Campus Decisions/Actions**

- Following CDC guidance, the University has suspended and restricted all University sponsored travel to level 3 countries – China, Iran, South Korea and Italy.
- Out of an abundance of caution, the University has cancelled (1) a spring break study abroad trip to London, France and Germany (2 faculty, about 25 students); and (2) student teaching practicums in Chile scheduled to begin in April (5 students). In each situation, faculty are working with the students to identify alternative ways for them to complete credits and continue their progression toward degree.
- In communication with a faculty member that was scheduled to travel to Japan, the University has been advised that the faculty member has cancelled their trip.
- Beginning in January, Facilities Management initiated high-touch cleaning throughout campus, in the following order (this is the same process used for H1N1):
  - o Clean & disinfect all restrooms and shower rooms
  - o Disinfect all high touch areas (door handles, student desks, light switches, etc.)
  - o Trash removal
  - o Clean entrance areas
  - o Clean public areas
  - o Clean classrooms (floors and walls)
  - o Clean offices
  - o Additional cleaning practices in areas such as Open Computer Labs have also been enhanced (e.g. Lab Assistants have always wiped down keyboards and mice with sanitizing wipes in Open Computer Labs. We now providing wipes to users of the labs so they can also wipe down before they use a keyboard and mouse as well).
- The Student Recreation Center is currently following University protocol to clean equipment and countertops, and has increased the number of times this is being done each day. Individuals using the Rec. Center are also being asked to be responsible users of the facility, which includes wiping down equipment before and after use.

- Signs have been posted around campus reminding people of good hygiene and hand-washing practices, and additional signage will follow in the days ahead.
- The President's Office is working with Executive Staff to compile a list of employee off campus travel now through spring/early summer to assist in ongoing conversations related to travel and to provide awareness in the event additional travel guidance is issued or disruptions are encountered.

#### **4. Going Forward**

- As University leaders, we have a responsibility to remind our colleagues of best practices and to model and encourage responsible behavior (i.e. proper hand-washing, good cough etiquette, encourage and remind sick employees to stay home, check CDC guidance before traveling – both international and domestic, etc.).
- Facilities Management and Purchasing are allowing departments to order Clorox wipes and hand sanitizer as needed (and as product is available). Any additional cleaning supplies should be coordinated and ordered through FM to ensure they are safe and approved.
- Residence Life and Facilities Management are engaged in conversations to identify residence hall space in the event an isolation/quarantine area is necessary.
- Student Life Services, Residence Life and Chartwells are working to coordinate and develop a pandemic response plan. Chartwells is asking all associates to report symptoms, exposures, and other health information associated with any illness. They are also telling associates to stay home if they are sick. University personnel have been advised by Chartwells that the company is reviewing and verifying compliance with the spread of illness, which includes proper hand washing, glove use, and cough etiquette. Representatives at each location served by Chartwells are also being asked to verify compliance with all cleaning and sanitizing policies and standard operating procedures including, dish machine operation, pot washing procedures, cleaning and sanitizing procedure, and proper storage of smallwares.
- The Provost has initiated conversations in Academic Affairs to develop contingency plans for course delivery in the event of a temporary interruption of service.