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Chancellor Messages_Working Remotely and March 25 Start of Classes

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University of Maine System

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UMS Community Guidance

- For Everyone
- For Students
- For Employees **New ▲**
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UMS Campus Specific Information

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Public Health Resources

- Maine Center for Disease Control — Coronaviruses
- CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information

Announcements

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- Universities Inventorying Resources for Maine's Coronavirus Response
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- Chancellor Malloy Message on Transition to Online Instruction
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- Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information University of Maine System
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- Governor Mills Convenes Coronavirus Response Team
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- Travel Monitoring and Prohibitions: University Travel to Italy Prohibited
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- We're Making Plans to be Ready for Coronavirus
February 28, 2020

Chancellor Malloy: Working Remotely and March 25 Start of Classes

18
MAR 2020

Dear UMS Community,

We are working in unprecedented times. Never in the history of our System have we seen a challenge such as that before us now. I'm immensely proud of how we're rising to meet it together, more so because I see evidence every day of how focused faculty and staff are on balancing the need to continue serving our students with the need to protect the health of our university communities.

I'm writing to announce important decisions on both.

First, though, I have important community information to share. We've all been following news of COVID-19 cases in Maine, aware that eventually someone in our community could be affected. A part-time USM faculty member alerted us this afternoon that they tested positive for COVID-19. We've confirmed that this particular faculty member does not maintain a presence on campus at USM, but they did interact with nine graduate students working in a local school district. We're in touch with the CDC, the nine graduate students, and the local school district, and the faculty member is in isolation, hopefully to recover. Under current CDC protocols and guidance, the evidence we have does not suggest that closing any USM facilities is necessary at this time, although my office and USM leadership will monitor the situation closely so as to not risk public health.

But I do believe a positive test in our broader UMS community requires us to take more aggressive steps.

First, even before learning of the USM community member's positive test, I asked our university Presidents to finalize plans by close of business tomorrow, March 18, to transition our university and System work to remote or telecommuting arrangements to the maximum extent possible beginning Thursday morning, March 19. Considering the growing need throughout our society to limit all non-essential public social interaction to slow the community spread of COVID-19, as well as to better support parents with childcare needs from extended K-12 school closures, it is now time to take this significant step. We will continue our operations in that fashion through at least Monday, April 6, subject to regular review and further decisions as the public health situation requires.

Let me be very clear: The University of Maine System is not stopping operations. We will meet our teaching, research, and public service missions to the State of Maine – which now includes coordination with the Maine CDC and our healthcare systems to protect public health. Our universities will continue to house and feed those who remain in our residence halls. We will maintain our infrastructure and protect the integrity of our research and other critical operations. Much of this work will require that some of us continue reporting to our offices and campuses, and our Presidents will determine which critical roles cannot be performed remotely. In all situations where it remains necessary for anyone to report to campus for work, we will strictly enforce CDC social distancing, personal hygiene, and enhanced sanitizing protocols. Our universities will decide locally which of their facilities can remain open to their campus communities on an appropriately limited basis, balancing, as I am, the need to serve our students while protecting public health.

Our System HR and Labor Relations teams will be working with our universities and labor union partners to support our faculty, staff, and students through these disruptions. In addition to all those who can reasonably perform their work remotely, faculty or staff who are feeling sick in any way should stay home and take advantage of sick and other forms of leave until they are symptom-free. We owe it to each other and our collective community health to abide by this guidance strictly and honestly.

Second, we will delay the resumption of classes after Spring Break by two days, so that the first day for classes will be Wednesday, March 25. This will give our world-class faculty and staff additional time to prepare for the transition to online and other distance modalities. It will also better support all faculty, staff, and students who are adjusting to disruption in their personal lives. At present, we are not making any other adjustments to the semester calendar. And as I informed you yesterday, we expect to make decisions by April 15 on how to celebrate our students who will complete their degree requirements this spring.

The Presidents and I feel a tremendous responsibility to keep you informed as we work together through this public health crisis. We'll be further limiting travel and our event restrictions to match current CDC guidance. I will be talking with the Presidents every day, as long as necessary, and making whatever further decisions are required to protect our students, faculty, and staff, all the while writing to you as often as necessary to keep you informed about how we continue to protect our communities and adapt to the disruptions caused by the Coronavirus and COVID-19.

To that end, I'll be using our Presidential Tour Facebook and YouTube event this evening, along with UMaine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy and UMaine students, faculty, and campus experts, to have a student-focused discussion on our university response to COVID-19 and the resources we're making available to our students to support their transition to distance instruction.

Our live discussion will start at 6:30 PM tonight and will be streamed on Facebook and YouTube. I invite you to watch and participate in this interactive conversation about the student-centered steps we are taking.

Our most important responsibility today is to protect our health and the health of those around us. Everything we do now should serve that purpose. From the earliest days of monitoring the Coronavirus back in late January, we've been planning and preparing to take responsible actions to protect the health of our university communities while we support our students' academic progress. With your help, and the actions explained here, we can continue that work together.

Sincerely,

Dannel Malloy
Chancellor

Distributed via Email 3/17/20