Re: Urgent Message from President Price Regarding COVID-19 Plans

gradschool-request@duke.edu <gradschool-request@duke.edu>
on behalf of
Dean Paula D. McClain <gradschool-dean@duke.edu>
Wed 3/11/2020 4:05 PM
To: Duke Graduate School <gradschool@duke.edu>
Dear graduate students,

I am writing to follow up on the message below from President Price last night about changes to university operations, including, among other things, the suspension of on-campus classes (transitioning to online instruction), the suspension of all domestic and international non-essential university-funded travel, and the policy that students should remain off campus if at all possible.

This announcement will no doubt raise questions about how you might be affected. Please continue to check coronavirus.duke.edu for the latest university-wide updates and information regarding Duke’s response to the coronavirus situation. The Graduate School has also set up a page (gradschool.duke.edu/coronavirus) to answer questions specific to our Ph.D. and master’s students. We are still compiling and adding information to this page, so please check it regularly for updates. If you have questions that are not addressed by those two sites, please send them to gradschool@duke.edu. We will do our best to answer your questions as quickly and fully as we can, but please understand that this is a rapidly developing situation, and policies can change on short notice.

We understand that these latest changes are adding to the stress and uncertainty that many of you have been dealing with in recent months as a result of the coronavirus’s spread. Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Graduate Student Affairs (grad-gsa@duke.edu; 919-684-2056) if you or someone you know needs assistance. This situation is affecting all of us, but The Graduate School staff is here to support you, and together we will get through it.

Sincerely,

Paula D. McClain, Ph.D.
Dean of The Graduate School
Vice Provost for Graduate Education

From: President Vincent E. Price
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 7:22 PM
Subject: Urgent Message from President Price Regarding COVID-19 Plans

COVID-19 Plans
March 10, 2020

To the Duke Community,

For the last several weeks, the Duke-wide Task Force has been working diligently to prepare for and plan our university’s response
to COVID-19. In the past few days, it has become clear that the spread of the virus continues across the country. Even though this is due to circumstances beyond our control, we can take steps now to minimize health and safety risks to Duke students, faculty, staff and the larger community, especially as students and faculty prepare to return from Spring Break.

To be sure, Duke University and Duke Health will remain open, and many of our operations and activities will continue, though with adjustments to working conditions.

Based on the latest data and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, input from our own faculty experts, and in consultation with the Academic Council and the Board of Trustees, we have adopted the following policies on classes, residential life, travel, events and visitors to campus, effective immediately. These policies apply to Duke University and Duke Health.

**ACADEMIC AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE**

Duke is committed to maintaining our daily operations, completing the semester, and ensuring that all students can fulfill their academic requirements as planned. We will, however, institute a series of social distancing practices to protect the health and continuity of our community.

First, all on-campus classes will be suspended until further notice, and we will transition to remote instruction (video and other forms of delivery) for all undergraduate, graduate and professional schools. In order to provide time for students and faculty make this transition, Undergraduate Spring Break will be extended to Sunday, March 22 and classes will resume on Monday, March 23. Graduate and professional schools will notify their students about their specific schedules.
Second, all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students who are currently out of town for Spring Break should NOT return to the Duke campus if at all possible. We know there are undergraduate students who are on campus at the moment or who will need access to campus housing this week because of a variety of circumstances. Those students who need to return to campus, even briefly, must register with Student Affairs in advance so we can support a limited on-campus population. Students who do remain in campus housing or in the Durham area should be aware that access to many facilities and services – including dining, recreation and libraries – will be limited. In addition, student activities and gatherings will be curtailed.

This was not an easy decision to make and came only after reviewing the range of options available in light of the rapidly changing situation in North Carolina, and nationally. The goal is to minimize situations in which members of our community might be exposed to those who have COVID-19, and to protect our students, faculty and staff who might be at elevated risk. This approach is consistent with recommendations from public health officials, and also mirrors the actions taken by many universities across the country.

We know this presents a significant disruption to everyone’s studies, research and work, and also prompts many questions and concerns. By tomorrow (Wednesday), undergraduate, graduate and professional students, as well as faculty, will begin receiving specific information from the university, their schools and Student Affairs about plans for courses, information technology and support services. In addition, we are developing plans to provide residential students with a prorated reimbursement of any previously paid and unused housing and dining fees. Further information on those plans will be forthcoming.
TRAVEL

At this time, we are also suspending all non-essential university-funded travel, both domestic and international. Requests for exceptions should be made to your supervisor or dean. This of course does not include personal activity, but we urge you to seriously reconsider any plans for long-distance travel and visits to areas that have been significantly impacted by COVID-19.

If your recent travel has included an area with active communal spread of coronavirus, and if upon your return to Durham you exhibit signs of illness such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing, you should contact Student Health (919-681-9355) or Employee Occupational Health and Wellness (919-684-3136) for further direction before coming back to campus. If you do choose to travel for personal reasons, we strongly encourage you to use the Duke Travel Registry so you can be reached in the event of changing circumstances.

EVENTS

We recognize that there is considerable concern and uncertainty about events that are scheduled to take place on-campus for the rest of the semester, including many of our prospective student visit programs. We are closely monitoring the guidance from public health officials and our own experts, with the goal of reducing the risk of exposure to and transmission of the virus without curtailing all activity on-campus.

Effective immediately, we are postponing, cancelling or virtualizing any Duke-sponsored in-person event with expected attendance of more than 50 people taking place on-campus or off-campus between now and April 20. This includes recruitment events, tours, student programs, reunions, performances, conferences and social events.
If you are planning an event with fewer than 50 people, we ask you to consider the following questions to determine whether your programs should also be cancelled or rescheduled:

--Will the program be in close quarters or require considerable personal interaction?
--Are any attendees scheduled to stay in personal homes?
--Are participants coming from locations with high infection rates?
--Will a significant number of attendees be in high-risk categories, including individuals over the age of 60?
--Is there elevated risk to staff who will help prepare for your event, serve your guests and clean up afterward?

If the answer to any of those questions is “yes,” then we strongly urge you to cancel, postpone or virtualize the program.

For all events and meetings, we urge faculty, staff and students to remind each other of good hygiene practices; to voluntarily remove yourself from the event if you are not feeling well; and to make accommodations for ill or self-quarantined individuals. Further guidance on athletic events will be forthcoming. We will continue to assess our policies to address changing circumstances, including a potential extension of the April 20 deadline.

For all events, regardless of the size, please follow these precautions:

--Encourage handwashing and hand sanitizing.
--Minimize communal food (open buffets and salad bars).
--Advise your attendees about these precautions.
--Urge anyone who feels ill to stay home and to participate online if possible.

**VISITORS TO CAMPUS**
The Duke campus also welcomes thousands of visitors a day to our campus, gardens, museums and tourist destinations. It is our intention to keep these destinations open to the extent possible, but managers of those facilities must observe the following precautions:

--Group visits and tours of more than 50 people are not permitted.
--Signage about hygiene, handwashing and hand sanitization should be located in prominent locations.
--Facilities managers should review plans for additional cleaning on a frequent basis.

We encourage you to bookmark and review the official university website https://coronavirus.duke.edu for the latest news and information about Duke’s policies and actions.

This is an unprecedented challenge for our university community, but we are very well prepared to meet it. The same innovative spirit that has driven a century of Duke discoveries will allow our faculty, staff and students to adapt to new teaching and learning experiences; the same commitment to service and courage demonstrated by Duke Health providers and staff every day will likewise carry us through these trying circumstances.

For while Duke may bring to mind the gothic spires and greening quads of our beautiful campus, we are ultimately a community of extraordinary people, people who—no matter where we are in the world—can count on each other for inspiration, inclusion, mutual respect and steady support. From your home here on campus to wherever this message finds you, very best wishes to the entire Duke community.

Vincent E. Price
President

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You are receiving this email because you are a member of the Duke community.