U-M President Schlissel’s Statement on COVID-19 Precautions and Recommendations

March 5, 2020

To All Members of the U-M Community:

We are writing to share the latest guidelines and information for students, faculty, and staff related to the COVID-19 virus. University of Michigan health professionals have been closely monitoring the rapidly changing developments, and we are making a number of recommendations to promote a safe and healthy environment for our community.

At this time, the university is proceeding with most scheduled events, classes and operations, including athletic events. However, some individual units are canceling or postponing events as a precaution. Please note that the situation can change quickly, and we will post any updates to our COVID-19 information page [1].

Important COVID-19 updates:

- At this time, there have been no cases diagnosed in Michigan. New cases continue to be identified in the United States and abroad.
- If you are sick, stay home from class or work. We ask faculty and managers to accommodate students and employees who stay home while sick. This includes relaxing documentation requirements and grade penalties for students missing class.
- If you’ve traveled to China, South Korea, Italy or Iran, stay home and self-isolate (tips listed below) and monitor your health for 14 days from your last day in that country. The self-isolation recommendation currently does not apply in general to travelers who only transit through an airport in one of these countries, per guidance [2] from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Register international travel using U-M Travel Registry [3].

Travelers returning to campus

If you have been in a country with a CDC Level 3 Travel Notice [4] (as of March 4, these are China, South Korea, Italy and Iran), you should self-isolate for 14 days. Get medical attention immediately if you have symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath.

Level 3 Notices are the CDC’s highest warning level, and they indicate a high risk to travelers due to widespread community transmission of respiratory illness caused by COVID-19 in these countries. Self-
isolation is currently not recommended for those who only traveled through an airport in a country under the Level 3 Travel Notice.

**Students needing to self-isolate** based on prior travel are encouraged to consider doing so at home or in a setting that minimizes contact with others. Student Life is working to make alternative housing arrangements on campus for students who need a place to self-isolate. Students needing to self-isolate can contact the Dean of Students office for assistance with arranging housing, meals, academics and classes, work, participation in campus organizations or requirements, and to discuss other considerations. Students with roommates who are self-isolating should take precautionary measures including limiting contact with anyone who is self-isolating, cleaning surfaces, washing hands frequently, and avoiding sharing utensils.

**Employees with questions about working arrangements** during self-isolation should contact their unit supervisor.

**How to self-isolate:**

- Stay home. Do not go to work, school or public areas.
- Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home. Avoid visitors to your home.
- Self-monitor for fever by checking temperature at least twice a day. Contact your healthcare provider if you develop a fever or respiratory symptoms.
- When seeking medical care, call ahead and tell them about your symptoms.
- Do not use public transport like buses or taxis.
- If you have symptoms, wear a facemask when you are around other people.

[More information on self-isolation is available here.](5)

**Illness prevention**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends several [everyday preventative actions](6) that individuals can take to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, and immediately throw the tissue in the trash and clean hands with sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently used objects and surfaces.
- Stay at home when you are sick.
- Consider alternatives to shaking hands.

Additionally, unless you are sick with cough, sneezing and fever, it is not advised to wear a mask.

**Campus preparations**

The university is taking extra precautions to clean high-touch surfaces on campus, including dining areas, classrooms, healthcare facilities and recreational facilities.

Michigan Medicine is actively preparing for potential COVID-19 patients and has activated comprehensive emergency response teams, which are ready and prepared for all types of emergencies. Patients and
visitors are being screened to quickly identify those with travel-related risk factors or potential contact with infected people.

Our healthcare providers also are preparing for the possibility of cases within the state of Michigan by providing standard facemasks to patients with respiratory illness or fever when they enter our healthcare facilities.

U-M officials and medical experts, in close coordination with the state and local public health experts, are closely monitoring for developments related to possible disruption to campus operations.

**Future travel**

Travel disruptions related to the virus are possible, and the situation continues to change quickly. We recommend that you carefully consider global travel given current uncertainties. Impact on travel may include flight cancellations, additional health screenings, quarantine, restrictions on re-entering the United States, or requirements to self-isolate upon arrival.

If you plan to travel in the near future, it’s important to build in as much flexibility as possible into your plans. Please register your international travel – personal or U-M-related – using the U-M Travel Registry [3]. The travel registry is the university’s official means for sharing urgent health, safety and security related information, and we have been sharing information with all registered travelers.

U-M Travel Restrictions related to COVID-19 are currently in place for China, Iran, Italy and South Korea. All U-M related travel to these countries, including for faculty and staff, is discouraged. Personal travel to these countries also is discouraged.

We are assisting students who were studying abroad and returning from Level 3 countries and will continue to monitor the conditions overseas. International programs not in the Level 3 countries are currently proceeding as planned, except for some that have been canceled by individual units. If you have questions about your education abroad program, please contact the program directly.

This is a rapidly changing situation. Please check the university’s Key Issues page for the latest information: https://publicaffairs.vpcomm.umich.edu/2019-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/ [7].

We know that COVID-19 is affecting many of our loved ones and friends. We also have heard reports of xenophobia associated with the outbreak – which we denounce in the strongest terms. During this time, it’s important that we support one another, promote a healthy community, and stay up to date on the latest information from our health professionals.

Sincerely,

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President

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