COVID-19 Update on U-M Classes, Travel, Study Abroad and Events

March 11, 2020

To All Members of the U-M Community:

University of Michigan health professionals have been closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19 over the past two months.

Our goals are to deliver on our mission while protecting health and safety by minimizing the potential spread of the disease, both within our community and in the broader society. The changes we are announcing today follow the general public health principle of limiting the interaction of people within larger groups to diminish disease transmission and protect everyone in our communities, particularly the most vulnerable.

Today, we are announcing new universitywide measures based on public health principles and the latest information and assessments for our community.

We will also continue to post all updates to our COVID-19 information page [1], as we monitor this rapidly changing situation in real time.

Most university operations will remain unchanged, with four exceptions that take effect Thursday, March 12, for all three of our campuses:

We are canceling all classes tomorrow and Friday. Classes will resume Monday (March 16) delivered remotely in alternative formats - and not meeting in person - through April 21, the last day of classes this semester.

Faculty and instructors should let students know how this transition will be handled for each of their classes. The two days of cancellations give faculty time to transition to alternative formats. The provost’s offices on each of our campuses have been making arrangements in our schools and colleges to facilitate these transitions.

We are canceling all U-M events and events organized by others on our campuses that would convene 100 people or more from Thursday, March 12 until at least April 21.

This cancellation includes Honors Convocation on March 15. Organizers of other large events may seek to
conduct their event virtually. We ask organizers to inform their audiences and participants of changes as soon as possible. The University will endeavor to reschedule any affected third-party events as practical. Individual units may change smaller events at their discretion, and all may consider virtual options.

Michigan Athletics is working to limit spectators at its on-campus competitions to parents and media to avoid high-density audiences. We encourage students to limit large social gatherings.

We are continuing to monitor the impact of the virus and will provide updates on major end-of-semester events, including commencements, when more information is available.

We are suspending all U-M international travel until at least April 21, with rare exceptions requiring approval. Domestic travel for university business is strongly discouraged.

Rare exceptions for international travel deemed essential may be granted if approved by a designated administrator. We encourage domestic travelers to seek virtual methods of convening for university business. The university also discourages personal domestic and international travel.

All U-M education abroad programs will be altered or suspended.

COVID-19 is becoming frequent in many places, and we want to be sure our students can get medical care that meets their needs, as more countries’ health care systems are facing greater pressure. Students in each education abroad program will have unique needs and considerations as we make plans to bring them home. We are working through those, including safety, location, ability to travel, and disruption to academic progress. We will work with the students to assist them with arrangements and academic accommodations, including credit for their coursework.

We are also canceling U-M education abroad programs scheduled for the spring semester, and will decide about programs that start July 1 or thereafter in the coming weeks when we have better information. This follows previous cancellation of all university-related travel to and education abroad programs in countries with a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Level 3 Travel Warning. Level 3 countries currently include: China, South Korea, Iran and Italy. We continue to closely monitor conditions overseas.

The actions we are taking follow recommendations from health and safety professionals working on all three of our campuses and at Michigan Medicine. Their work has been ongoing for several weeks in close coordination with public health officials at the federal, state and local levels, along with other universities.

Last night, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced that there are two presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in the state of Michigan, one of whom is being treated at Michigan Medicine. We fully agree with her in urging everyone to follow public health guidelines listed below for preventing the spread of viruses.

Additionally, our COVID-19 information page has specific guidance developed by our health professionals for individuals who have traveled to areas affected by the virus. That information is available here [2].

We ask managers and supervisors to continue to encourage employees who are sick to stay home from work. Additional precautions are in place in Michigan Medicine to protect employees from risks associated with caring for patients. All U-M employees who may be at greater risk should contact human resources in their school, college or unit or Staff Human Resources Services.
Steps to promote a healthy community

There are everyday actions to help prevent the spread of all respiratory viruses:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Consider alternatives to shaking hands.
- Unless you are sick with cough, sneezing and fever, it is not advised to wear a mask.

Additional actions and resources

The university remains open:

- For students who choose to remain on campus, Michigan Dining and U-M Housing will remain operational. We are working to make changes to minimize risk for students in our dining halls.
- The Office of the Vice President for Research has partnered with teams across campus to develop a guidance document with information and resources so faculty and staff can best manage their ongoing research and scholarship activities. Please refer back to this webpage frequently for evolving guidance on your research operations. research.umich.edu/covid-19
- During spring break, the University Health Service on the Ann Arbor campus implemented changes to manage traffic through the building and maintain an environment as safe as possible. This work frees up additional capacity to see patients needing treatment for respiratory symptoms.
- Michigan Medicine is prepared to care for patients diagnosed with COVID-19, putting protections in place for patients and employees. They have activated our emergency response protocols, proactively ordered supplies and initiated plans for handling potential patients.
- We have created a Remote Resources Guide to assist students, faculty and staff with working or engaging remotely, and the Ann Arbor Provost's Office has additional information on remote instruction.
- We have heard concerns from members of our community who have chronic health conditions, and will work to assist with accommodations for classes or work arrangements. Students needing additional assistance should contact the Dean of Students office, and employees should contact their unit supervisor.

We thank the many students, faculty and staff who have been working with us during the COVID-19 outbreak. We know there are many questions and concerns as the situation continues to change rapidly and will continue to post the latest information to our COVID-19 information page. The page also includes frequently asked questions, definitions of key terms, and additional resources and information for the U-M community.

Viruses like COVID-19 affect all of us, and we appreciate everyone’s efforts to support one another, promote a healthy community, and stay up to date on the latest information from our health professionals.