March 11, 2020

TO: MSU faculty

FROM: Teresa A. Sullivan  
Interim Provost  
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dear faculty colleagues,

As President Stanley’s message this morning noted, last night the state of Michigan confirmed two cases of coronavirus in Wayne and Oakland Counties. Early this morning we learned that the Ingham County Health Department is currently investigating and monitoring an individual linked to our campus. Due to this, we are now taking additional steps to keep our community safe.

It is our desire to be both proactive in keeping everyone healthy and safe, and also to continue the important work of the university. One of the best ways to prevent the spread of any viral disease is to limit contact and transmission of the virus. Effective today at noon, MSU is moving face-to-face instruction in lectures, seminars, and classroom settings to remote instruction. We are continuing to work with faculty and staff on laboratory and performance classes, clinics, and internships, and the university will provide additional guidance in the coming week. This will be a fluid process and, along with President Stanley, I also ask for everyone’s patience.

This suspension of in-person classes will last until Monday, April 20 and we will reevaluate this decision on an ongoing basis, sharing additional updates or modifications as more information becomes available. Our two overriding objectives will continue to be health and safety and student success.

I realize you may not be ready to move to some sort of alternate method of instruction immediately, and that you may need to postpone a few class sessions while you get your plans in order. Please communicate with your students early and often, sharing with them any changes you implement as you make those decisions. Be sure to establish some way of holding remote office hours, and to inform your students of how that contact will be maintained.

As you continue your planning, reach out if you need help. The online resource to support educators in moving courses to remote instruction, keepteaching.msu.edu, is live and continues to be updated. Remote teaching is a way to continue instruction when face-to-face meetings are disrupted and you are not able to meet in person. Michigan State University has developed best practices for teaching courses remotely. The recommendations on this site can help you plan, modify, and implement remote teaching strategies to lead to the best outcomes for students across the university. Being consistent as an institution can help minimize the impact of disruption in course format for student learning.

The deans are aware that special arrangements will be required for teaching labs, performance courses, clinical settings, and internships. These special cases are best handled within your departments/colleges. In all instances, our overriding objectives are to complete courses and keep our students on track for success.
During this time period of remote instruction, students doing purely remote work can return to their permanent place of residence, and we encourage this because there are advantages for social distancing. For those not able to go home, we will continue to fully support students in our residence halls and dining facilities. Regardless of where our students are, we encourage them to practice appropriate social distancing and enhanced preventive public health measures such as those we've previously discussed in our communications and on our 2019 Novel Coronavirus website.

At this time, the university is primarily focused on making the transition to remote learning opportunities. We will have more communications in the coming days regarding remote and telecommuting options for university employees.

We know there are many logistical questions related to these decisions, and we are working to address them. Our priority remains the health and safety of our campus and community members. Your cooperation helps to ensure an appropriate response across our institution to this rapidly changing situation.

The novel coronavirus situation is evolving daily. Providing fully remote learning for so many disparate classes will be an enormous task. Like President Stanley, I am very grateful for the faculty, staff, and students who are working around the clock to get this done. We won’t get everything right the first time, and I appreciate your understanding and continued cooperation in the coming days as the university works through needed changes and modifications to these plans.

Please continue visiting the msu.edu/coronavirus website and the keepteaching.msu.edu site for information; these websites are updated frequently. We also have added a free hotline to help address questions from our students, faculty, staff, and parents: 888-353-1294.

This is a time for our community to come together, and I remain confident in our ability to navigate this difficult and uncertain period.

Sincerely,

Teresa A. Sullivan
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Postscript: This material, to be posted soon on the keepteaching.msu.edu website, may be helpful to you:

Plan

It’s essential to plan for course adjustments and communication in order to ensure a smooth transition into the remote learning space.

- **Adjust your expectations for students:** You may need to adjust some of your expectations for students, including participation, engagement, grading, and deadlines. As you think through these changes, keep in mind the effect that a campus disruption may have on students’ ability to meet those expectations. Students may encounter
additional barriers, which you should be mindful of. These include illness, lacking power or internet connections, or needing to care for family members. Be ready to handle requests for extensions or accommodations equitably.

- **Some students rely on MSU’s infrastructure for internet access.** Should access to campus be restricted it is possible that some students may have limited internet connectivity or be reliant on cellular networks for their internet access.

- **Develop a communication plan:** It’s important that you develop a robust communication plan. Clarify your modified expectations and course elements and communicate them to students. Tell students how they can contact you (email, online office hours, Microsoft Teams, etc.), and how soon they can expect a reply from you. Consider using the D2L announcements and discussion board tools to push out course-level communications.

- **Consider realistic goals for continuing instruction:** Be realistic about what can and cannot be accomplished in a remote environment. Refocus the course goals on realistically attainable objectives. Clarify what your expectations are for students’ efforts with regard to reading and homework. Be clear with students what you expect of them with regard to participation and online discussion.

**Adjust your syllabus as needed:** Clarify what policies (attendance, participation, grading, schedule) will need to be altered for the duration of the remote delivery. Provide as much detail as possible about changes. Do not expect students to participate in synchronous sessions at a time other than the normal course time.