



3-12-2020

## March 12, 2020: Covid-19 Update, Letter from the President

Kettering University

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# Kettering University

1700 University Avenue • Flint, Michigan 48504-6214

Thursday, March 12, 2020

To: The Kettering University Community

Subject: 2020 March 12 Update: COVID-19 Coronavirus

**This message contains important information, please read it in its entirety.**

**Current Status: Neither the University nor Genesee County have a known case of COVID-19 at this time.**

Our COVID Response Team formed in late January has been meeting regularly since then. Over the past week it has been intensely evaluating a wide variety of sources of information on the spread of the virus in our nation and incorporating guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and others.

Unlike many of the public institutions in Michigan which are currently on spring break, or returning from it, we are in a critical time in the academic term – 9<sup>th</sup> week. Next week, 10<sup>th</sup> week, our students normally are completing final work in all of their courses, and in many cases A-Section seniors are completing final requirements for graduation. Often the work in 10<sup>th</sup> week is capstone in nature and therefore has a disproportionately large weight in the calculation of final grades. And finals week follows in 11<sup>th</sup> week.

Disrupting the delivery of courses at this time cannot be done casually and must be done reflecting the true nature of the risks involved. We are committed to acting on objective evaluations of data and not the emotions of the moment or media pressure, to using the best factual information available to us, and to incorporating the mission and particular nature of our institution.

This means we do not do what other institutions are doing simply to conform but only if our evaluations and the information available to us merits a similar response. We recognize that the response of a large public university with 47,000 students is not necessarily appropriate for us, but neither do we discount it. We have been evaluating the spread and virology of the COVID-19 outbreak since January, and our response to date has reflected these evaluations and this philosophy.

Above everything else, in this situation we are committed to protecting the health and safety of our community by minimizing the potential spread of the disease while honoring the commitments we have made to our students to deliver an educational opportunity without compromise. We also prioritize maintaining campus access to the greatest extent possible, especially for students who must complete requirements to receive their degree this spring.

There are no cases of COVID-19 on our campus or in our community at this time. Given our current understanding of the distribution and spread of the virus in the US, we believe that in the future there will most certainly be cases in our area, however. In that event, we are mindful that the student population in universities represents one of the least vulnerable to developing severe coronavirus illness, but it also represents one of the most conducive to its spread. So, we also have considered that the presence of a large cohort of students, who themselves may be at low relative risk for serious disease, may represent through spread a much greater risk for our faculty and staff.

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Today we are announcing a series of changes that reflects these priorities with the goal of limiting the interaction of large groups of people, following updated guidance from the CDC and the State Department.

## Study Abroad

On March 11, 2020, President Trump issued a broad set of restrictions on travel to and from Europe. **These restrictions apply to foreign nationals only**, and they specifically limit travel to the US by residents of 26 countries. On March 11, the CDC issued a Level 3 declaration for all countries in Europe.

In response, and consistent with the criteria for our travel restrictions, we are making the following difficult but necessary decisions:

- **All Study Abroad programs scheduled for the Spring term 2020 are cancelled.**
- **All Incoming Student Exchanges are cancelled (except for in-country students, see below).**
- **All overseas Kettering students and U.S.-based faculty and staff will be returned home as soon as possible.**

We understand the disappointment of impacted students with this decision; however, we are acting to ensure your safety and well-being, and we are committed to doing everything possible to help you with this transition. We have developed individualized plans for each of our impacted students, and the Office of International Programs will contact each student individually over the coming days to discuss their specific situation and mitigation plan.

And consistent with State Department Recommendations:

- **Incoming in-country exchange students will be permitted to remain and continue the program in the spring as long as they have observed our quarantine requirements.**

We have students currently overseas in programs in a number of countries. The needs of each of these students are unique and we are making plans for each student individually to ensure that they return safely and that there is minimal disruption to their academic progress.

## Campus Events and Visitors

On March 11, 2020 the University issued the following restrictions, effective until further notice:

- If you are planning a large (>100 person) university event on or off campus in March or April, you must notify the Office of the President ([president@kettering.edu](mailto:president@kettering.edu)) of that plan.
- **ALL on-campus events over 100 persons are cancelled. This applies to both University affiliated or externally organized events.** All exceptions must be approved by the Office of the President, regardless of the current state of planning or commitments made.

- The Science Fair, scheduled for the campus this weekend, has been cancelled.

Visitors to campus are asked to respect our efforts to protect the health and well-being of our community and to not come to the campus if they are experiencing symptoms or have been in contact with someone who has either traveled to a CDC identified Level 2/Level 3 country or is ill.

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## **Campus Response**

Our University remains open and most University operations will remain unchanged, with the following exceptions (subject to future modification) that take effect Friday, March 13 at 6p.m.:

### **Guidelines for the Remainder of the Term**

To our faculty, we realize these changes ask you to shift how you deliver your courses very late in the term, if not in some cases completely rethink how you teach. We are making these changes, however, to minimize the risk of promoting the amplified spread of the COVID-19 virus across the Kettering community:

- **At 6p.m. on Friday March 13, all in-person classes on our campus will be suspended**, to be replaced for the remainder of the term with other alternative or virtual learning and examination options.
- All resident students are encouraged to return home if it is possible depending on their personal circumstances. Students who have already left, or will be leaving, should not plan to return to campus until further notice.
- Faculty and instructors should inform all students in their courses how they intend to manage this final two-week period. The Provost will issue guidance shortly to the faculty on how to manage this transition, and incompletes or other deferrals of requirements for completion should not be used.
  - Faculty are encouraged to use all available virtual and alternate technologies to complete the final week of the term, and to modify their grading policies if required to accommodate the disruption of delivery in 10th week. All faculty will receive an email from Provost Zhang addressing a variety of academic issues that follow from the decision to move to alternative instruction.
- Students will receive information directly via email from their deans and/or specific faculty regarding any specific information for their courses.
- Given the hands-on nature of many of our classes and project completion requirements for degree completion, individual deans will communicate specific course completion requirements and expectations to their faculties as appropriate.
- More details, including those covering the final learning experience, will be provided by the Provost's Office

All campus facilities, including residence and dining halls, remain open and available to students during this period.

**Final Exams – 11<sup>th</sup> week**

- Final exams will be delivered consistent with instructions provided by the Provost.

## **Spring Term 2020**

- **The start of Spring term 2020 will be delayed by one week to April 13<sup>th</sup>.**
- **No decision has yet been made to move the campus to virtual course delivery in the Spring term.** We will continue to monitor and evaluate the situation and communicate to the campus community no later than April 8<sup>th</sup> on whether the University will reconvene and reestablish face to-face on-campus delivery on April 13<sup>th</sup>, or if we will transition to a period of virtual delivery of coursework and assessments for some portion of the Spring term.

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## **University Dining and Housing, Student Communications**

- Residence halls will remain open until March 28. Students remaining on campus will be supported as usual in our residence halls and dining facilities.
- The Sunrise Room will move from self-service to full-service. The take-away (“Grab and Go”) of normal portions will be permitted without penalty to encourage individual diners to disperse and not congregate in large groups in the dining room.
- Students who are unable to return home and who wish to remain on campus in Thompson Hall must contact the Office of Student Life (or the Office of International Programs for international students) to obtain approval to remain beyond March 28.
- Residential, university, and dining programming on campus may be limited after March 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **Student Extracurricular Activities**

- Effective March 13<sup>th</sup>, all student extracurricular activities including university travel, competitions, events, programs, performances, intramurals, meetings, etc., both on and off campus, are cancelled through Monday, April 13.

## **Employees and University Operations**

Our University remains open and operations continue with appropriate measures to protect the health of all on our campus and in our community. We will maintain normal operations unless otherwise indicated, and faculty and staff who are not experiencing symptoms of illness are expected at work as usual.

- Kettering Dining Services and University Housing will remain operational.
- We have been working closely with local health care providers to ensure that we are prepared to transfer individuals suspected of having COVID-19 to local health care facilities, and we have in place processes to aid in the timely delivery of assistance for our students and employees. We have emergency response protocols in place, and have proactively ordered supplies and developed plans for handling potential illness on the campus.
- We recognize the work of many of our faculty and staff requires being on campus. However, for those who are able work elsewhere remotely, please work with your supervisors to begin preparing for remote work should this become necessary in the weeks ahead.

Human Resources will be sending out an email to all staff in the near future to provide additional, more detailed guidance on work-related questions you may have.

We know many questions remain unanswered. We appreciate your patience and understanding as the University responds to this challenging situation. Thank you to all who are working so hard to ensure the safety of our community and the continuity and integrity of our operations.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, so it is important to continue to check regularly the University website (<https://www.kettering.edu/covid-19>) for updates in addition to public health advisories on the virus which may be accessed through our website as well.

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We will be publishing specific points of contact for questions on the website in the near future, so please look for those and we will continue to communicate regularly with you as more information is available. The situation is evolving, and we will continue to make any changes to our operations to support the health and safety of our community.

Thank you & Warmest Regards,

Dr. Robert K. McMahan  
*President and Professor of Physics*  
*Chair, COVID Response Team*

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