



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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To: Montana Board of Regents; Montana University System Chief Executive Officers; Montana Community College Presidents; Governor Steve Bullock

From: Clayton T. Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education

Date: March 12, 2020

Subject: **COVID-19 UPDATE**

In partnership with the Board of Regents and as Commissioner of Higher Education for the Montana University System, the health and safety of our campus communities remains our top priority. With that in mind, and in light of the rapidly evolving challenge presented by the COVID-19 outbreak, I am directing all MUS campuses to implement the following decisions as soon as possible:

1. **As of [March 23rd](#), all MUS campuses will, in every instance possible, transition all in-class instruction to online or other remote teaching modalities that do not require in-class presence.** Individual departments, colleges, and universities should provide all material assistance and accommodation possible to faculty and students throughout this transition.
2. **MUS campuses will remain open and operational for students.** This includes residence halls, dining services, computer labs, and most other campus services. Employees will continue to report to work unless instructed otherwise or work-from-home accommodations are developed in individual cases.
3. To protect public health, **MUS campuses will implement appropriate social distancing measures in line with CDC guidelines and recommendations.** This should include restrictions on large lectures, theater performances, academic conferences, and other large gatherings.
4. **All MUS students and employees need to monitor their official email address for more communications and planning details** between now and [March 23rd](#).

These decisions are in effect until further notice. Our COVID-19 challenge remains fluid, however, and as our campus communities prepare for Spring Break, it is our responsibility to establish the current course of action while also preparing for new circumstances as they emerge. If and when we consider a return to face-to-face instruction we will provide as much advance notice as possible and clear instructions for an orderly return to normal operations. Throughout, my office will continue to consult with Governor Steve Bullock, the Montana University System Board of Regents, health authorities, and other statewide partners as we assess our current policies. I ask that every campus leader be ready to answer questions and provide relevant information in a timely manner to students, faculty, and staff.

I do not take these decisions lightly. I am committed to supporting the educational progress of our students and minimizing disruption to campus life whenever possible. I believe that the course of action outlined above is the best way to balance our commitment to protect the public health and safety of our students, employees, and communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clayton T. Christian".

Clayton T. Christian
Commissioner of Higher Education