

SPECIAL BULLETIN TO THE FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY
March 13, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Coronavirus Update—Revised Residence Hall Return Policy

Dear Franciscan University Faculty and Staff,

Peace and blessing.

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, I sent a [special bulletin](#) outlining the University's response to COVID-19 and announcing the suspension of in-person (face-to-face) instruction through April 3, 2020.

This decision by the University, just two days ago, was based on the recommendations of our multi-disciplinary COVID-19 Emergency Response Team and reflected governmental guidance and what the University believed necessary to protect the health and safety of the University community.

When I wrote just a couple of days ago, we understood that our approach to campus life would need to change, broadly and in many details. Since that time, President Trump announced an additional travel ban from European Countries. The Governor of Ohio declared a state of emergency, cancelled K-12 schools for three weeks, and placed bans on gatherings of 100 or more people (religious services excepted). We have witnessed a dramatic shift in risk mitigation strategies with all major sports leagues suspending competition. The World Health Organization officially classified this disease as a pandemic.

As COVID-19 continues to spread, and as public health leaders have offered more definitive guidance, we have come to see that our Franciscan University community has a role to play in the concerted public health response. State and federal public health officials advise that to slow a spreading virus like COVID-19, the right time for decisive action is before it is established on our campus. Therefore, although the risk to those on campus remains low, given the ongoing spread in our state and elsewhere, we are now escalating our institutional response to protect our entire community:

- Residence halls will remain closed until at least Sunday, March 22; students are not permitted to check back into the residence halls before that time. Exceptions will be considered for students who are returning from University-sponsored spring break travel, for international students, students who are engaged in academic clinicals/internships, and in cases of extreme hardship.
- Students may return to campus prior to Sunday, March 22, to pick up some or all of their belongings; however, these students are not permitted to check back into the residence halls. Students who are returning to pick up belongings must communicate with their Residence Director. The University is not able to pack up student belongings.
- All students who are currently at their permanent place of residence should remain there or, if they traveled over break, they should make arrangements to return directly home, if at all possible.
- For those students who are granted an exception to stay on campus during this period, in full disclosure, you need to be aware that the University will be taking certain actions that impact normal student life in response to guidance from governmental and public health officials. Such measures include changes to meal service, social distancing and de-densification, mandatory health screenings, limits on events and gatherings, mandatory quarantine/self-isolation, etc. These actions may change and increase on a daily basis as circumstances require.
- Online instruction for all classes will continue, as previously announced, beginning no later than March 23, 2020, and continuing online through at least April 3, 2020. Students will hear directly from their respective deans and/or faculty instructors regarding specific instructions and class start dates. Accordingly, students should check their University email and Blackboard frequently for assignments and future updates. Courses that were originally delivered online will continue as originally scheduled.
- These changes do not impact our students at our campus in Gaming, Austria.

We are taking this dramatic action to protect the health and safety of everyone at Franciscan University. As at any residential college, our residence halls put students in close quarters. What's more, our unique living and learning environment, which provides invaluable relationships, fellowship, and support for one another comes with high levels of personal engagement, close contact, as well as shared spaces, equipment, and supplies. These hallmark characteristics of our community, which we cherish and take pride in during normal times, increases the risk of COVID-19 spreading on our campus.

Reducing the density of the campus population is a public health measure intended not only to protect our students but to reduce risk for those of us who remain here, including our dedicated faculty and staff. For now, University operations will continue as normal, and employees should report to work unless they are sick. If employees feel sick, it is of the utmost importance that they stay home! If you have an underlying medical condition or vulnerability (such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, or other conditions listed here) or are living in the same household as someone who does, please discuss the risks with your health care providers. The University will work with affected employees to facilitate remote work arrangements or designated sick leave. In case working remotely ultimately becomes necessary, all units should start planning to make that broadly feasible. We also ask that supervisors consider evolving conditions in the wider community that staff may have to contend with, including sick family members, school closures, and other potential effects of COVID-19. More information for employees addressing these issues will be posted on MyFranciscan later today; you'll be notified by email when it is available.

As I said earlier today, I am confident that God is present in all of this and that he will guide us through these days. Please know of my prayers for you and your families, and join me in praying for our community and our world in these days.

Peace,

Father Dave Pivonka, TOR
President
Franciscan University of Steubenville