

To: Montgomery College Community

From: Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard, President
Office of the President

Subject: **Montgomery College Coronavirus Response Plan**

Date: March 11, 2020

Although no cases of coronavirus have been confirmed among Montgomery College students, faculty, or staff, we are all aware of cases in our county that have been reported by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have declared that “institutions of higher education can play an important role” in taking steps to prevent community spread of the COVID-19. (*Interim Guidance for Administrators of Institutions of Higher Education to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to the Coronavirus Disease.*)

The College is not closing. The College will continue to provide instruction, including counseling and support services, but will do so remotely. This decision was made with the input of my Senior Administrative Leadership Team, the President’s Executive Cabinet, and the MC Coronavirus Advisory Team, a group made up of faculty, public safety professionals, and a dean. Montgomery College takes this responsibility seriously and will be taking several steps to help limit the spread of the virus. These efforts will require careful coordination among MC faculty and staff in order to continue to thoroughly support student learning during this period.

I ask your collaboration and patience as we transition to emergency remote teaching and emergency remote working over the next several days.

- The College will cancel classes on Thursday, March 12; Friday, March 13; and Saturday, March 14 in order to prepare for a transition to emergency remote teaching and remote working.
- Instructional and counseling faculty will use March 12 and 13 to prepare for emergency remote instruction and advising, and staff will prepare for emergency remote work. Resources and training will be made available for faculty and staff who need assistance in making this transition.
- As planned, during the week of the scheduled spring recess, March 16-20, classes are not scheduled but College employees will work remotely to enhance our continuity of operations planning and assist in the transition to online services. We will know more about this by the end of the day on Friday, March 13.
- From March 23 to April 3 classes will be delivered remotely. Students are expected to engage in emergency remote learning during this time. Some employees will need to be present on campuses and College locations during this transition work but should practice social distancing (no close contact) and frequent hand washing to minimize the

risk of transmitting the virus if it is present.

- From March 23 to April 3, along with remote teaching and working, some labs or academic learning spaces will be opened on the campuses to provide support for faculty and students.

There will be restrictions on the number of employees or students that can be present in a given space at any one time. The College will work to have spaces available on campus for adjunct faculty. For instructional faculty who do not have technology at home, they will have the option of coming on to a campus to use our technology to teach remotely. The College will also attempt to support students who need help that is not related to academics, such as food banks and emergency support services. These details will be finalized over the next few days. We will be providing frequent communications on event cancellations, postponements, and possible transitions to virtual events.

The College will re-evaluate several factors related to operations by **April 1** and communicate any further plans as conditions warrant. For the immediate future, the College will make the following alterations in order to maintain its continuity of operations.

- The College will work to distribute technology to College employees to prepare for full operations resuming remotely on **March 23**.
- The College will work to assess the technology needs of students who may lack internet access outside the College, laptops, or smart devices, and plan for assisting them.
- The College will take steps to move the College's operations online, following our Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).

In keeping with the College's commitment to equity and radical inclusion, we will compensate casual/temporary workers for the two-week period of emergency remote work, based on an average of their hours to date; compensation after that point will be reevaluated.

After two weeks of remote instruction and working (March 23 to April 3), the College will reassess its needs and communicate next steps. As you know this is an evolving process and our decisions will be based on several factors including guidance from Montgomery County DHHS and the CDC, as well as consultation with the University System of Maryland (USM) and others.

The College is taking these steps out of precaution due to local cases of coronavirus infection as reported by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the long incubation period of the coronavirus, which may facilitate its spread by people who are asymptomatic, and the absence of a vaccine. In addition, the propensity for student and employee travel during spring break and the high level of tourism in our region means that conditions for transmission of this virus are potentially elevated. We believe these factors elevate the College's responsibility to contribute to public health efforts to minimize the spread of this virus. As an institution that is closely integrated with our local community, the College is hopeful that these steps will help reduce variables that contribute to any potential spread. The College has been in communication with the Montgomery County DHHS to inform them of our plans and they are consistent with the approach being taken by other local institutions of higher education.

Please watch for continuing updates on how to participate in the College's transition during this period. We will communicate more details in the next couple of days. You can follow the College on social media and monitor the MC website, Blackboard, MC Alert, and MC emails as we provide updates related to COVID-19. The MC website will continue to provide updates on College developments and offer links to information from health authorities. Please see [my memo](#) of March 6, 2020 for further details on the MC Coronavirus Advisory Team, prevention protocols, and the cleaning of buildings. Questions can be directed to publicsafety@montgomerycollege.edu.

Our efforts will require the collaboration of thousands of employees and students, so I ask your patience and assistance as we work through any technical or administrative challenges we encounter.