



University of Idaho

TO: University of Idaho Students, Faculty and Staff

FROM: Scott Green, President
John Wiencek, Provost and Executive Vice President
Blaine Eckles, Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

DATE: March 22, 2020

SUBJECT: Flexibility During First Week of Classes After Break

It has been a fast-changing week and we continue to respond to the unprecedented impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on our lives. Moving all courses to online/remote delivery and reducing the face-to-face interactions of students, faculty and staff are the best methods to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

We are in daily conversations with Idaho Public Health and our local healthcare providers. The latest guidance is to bolster social distancing efforts. Access to many Moscow businesses and campus services have been reduced to reflect the fast-changing situation. Positive diagnosis of COVID-19 in people under 30 has been announced in Whitman County, to the west of Moscow, and Kootenai County, to the north.

We have heard concerns from our students, including in an online petition. These concerns are valid and not unlike those we all face in these uncertain times. These may include:

- Financial concerns of traveling to move out;
- Further financial concerns from loss of jobs;
- Stress of balancing moving out while classes begin;
- Families who are self-isolated, sick and dealing with personal struggles;

Given the looming threat of infection, the risk of death to some populations, and guidance from our public health professionals, we believe engaging students in classes is an important way to reduce downtime and hinder the overwhelming desire to gather socially and risk further transmission of the virus. Some have understandably advocated delaying the start of classes once Spring Break has concluded, but to do so may result in students returning to campus during a time when they should instead be sheltering in place, causing more significant stress and challenges and increasing risks to personal health.

It may seem that Moscow isn't highly impacted by coronavirus, but we are in regular contact with local healthcare professionals who believe the virus is already here. We know the virus is already moving through other parts of our state. Due to local testing limits, whether unavailable or delayed, people continue to move through this community freely and risk spreading the virus with or without symptoms.

For these reasons, we will begin online/remote classes as planned on Monday but ask that everyone remain understanding and flexible as we finish our semester. In light of these developments, please review the updated guidance below:

Faculty

- Be flexible and patient with students who are trying to balance moving home with the demands of classes. Flexibility is especially encouraged in things such as attendance requirements, assignment due dates, class participation, etc. Please understand that some students will also face technology issues as they transition to online/remote learning.
- Be prepared for students to reach out to you as they are working through this challenging transition as many may be facing a variety of obstacles.
- We appreciate your efforts to move your classes into this format on such short notice. In fact, these efforts are inspiring. [CETL remains available](#) to help you, if needed.

- If you can teach from home, please do so. If you are not able to do so and must return to your office, we request you engage in social distancing.

Students

- Classes will begin tomorrow, March 23, via online/remote learning. Please be understanding of the challenges your faculty faces in moving all courses to online/remote delivery. We must all be flexible during this transition.
- Don't be afraid to reach out to your faculty if life circumstances are keeping you from class this week.
- Do not return to Moscow unless you have an urgent need to do so. Staying at your permanent residence is one of the most impactful things you can do for the safety of our communities.
- If you live in residence halls, your personal items do not need to be picked up until May 16. Please email housing@uidaho.edu for further assistance.
- If you live in a Greek chapter house, your chapter should work with you to access your items and move out in a reasonable and responsible manner. Please email greek@uidaho.edu for further assistance.
- If you are returning to Moscow to retrieve personal items, please be intentional and efficient. Get your items and return to your permanent residence as promptly as possible.
- If you will remain in Moscow, please get settled and immediately engage in social distancing. Gathering in groups simply increases the risk to all. While neither Idaho nor Moscow are currently under a "shelter in place" directive, ***you should be engaging in social distancing behavior as though we are.***

Staff

- Thank you for continuing the great work you do for the university and our students. Your presence is appreciated as some students return and we move to a new teaching structure.
- Continue to be understanding of students, faculty and each other as we go through these challenging times.

University leadership is working diligently to provide the best outcomes in a unique and often frustrating situation. If you are experiencing unique challenges, please contact the Dean of Students at askjoe@uidaho.edu, the [Provost](#) or [President](#). If you are worried about someone, including yourself, [file a CARE report](#).

Students, your Vandal experience, while different from what we all thought it would be, is still a valued part of your education. While we cannot mitigate every scenario, we are working to make the best decisions for the nearly 12,000 students and 2,600 employees engaged in university classes and functions this spring. Learn more about our response by visiting our [coronavirus website](#).

We care about you, about our community and about doing all we can to slow the spread of coronavirus so we can all come back together again as soon as possible.

Keep Calm and Vandal On.

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