



University of Idaho

TO: University of Idaho Staff
CC: University of Idaho Faculty
FROM: Scott Green, President
DATE: March 24, 2020
SUBJECT: Work From Home, If You Can

I have heard concerns about our most recent communication and its lack of focus on staff. Please know this email was written to address student concerns and the related and urgent request to extend Spring Break. Rapidly communicating how the immediate change-over to offering classes online contributes to the safety of our community by slowing the spread of COVID-19 was primary in our minds.

Your role at U of I is incredibly important to student success — you work directly with students, helping them move, navigate technology issues, address job loss and providing counseling, to name just a few things. You also keep our buildings clean, feed our community and maintain the campus so we all can comfortably focus on our jobs. Thank you for your hard work and commitment. Your efforts do not go unnoticed and are greatly appreciated.

It is also important for us to keep you as healthy and safe as possible. The need to help slow the spread of coronavirus is becoming more apparent each day. Advice from Idaho Public Health officials indicates working remotely, for those who are able, is one of the ways we can help you and our community. As such, I am asking all employees who have the ability to work

from home to do so by the end of the day Wednesday, March 25, 2020.

No paperwork is required, we have temporarily eliminated that requirement, but please work with your supervisor to determine if working from home is the right choice for you and the work you do.

I recognize we have staff who cannot work from home because of the nature of the work performed. By moving as many people as possible out of offices and workspaces, it improves the safety of those who cannot work remotely by reducing exposure and increasing the ability to keep social distance.

Our Moscow campus and our centers around the state remain open, although with limited physical staff. If you need to use your office, please use social distancing and try to self-isolate as much as possible.

Working from home brings its own challenges, not the least of which is caring for children who are out of school, family members who are sick, or not having the technology access needed to be effective. I encourage you to work with your supervisor and do what you can to balance your personal challenges with your work.

We are preparing to implement the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which is being finalized in Congress this week. The provisions of the FFCRA apply when an employee is unable to work because of COVID-19-related issues. The FFCRA provides emergency paid sick leave under certain conditions related to COVID-19 and will expand family and medical leave to include caring for children due to school or daycare closures. For other absences outside of flexplace and the FFCRA, use of accrued sick and annual leave are still available. Human Resources will share more on this program as it becomes available.

The university's health benefits also provide for COVID-19 testing, if available, at no cost to you. Learn more by visiting the Care section of [U of I's coronavirus website](#).

Many of you are already working remotely. But as more do so, departments and even buildings may need to be closed for security reasons if there are no employees present. The decision to close a building has been delegated to the Provost and Executive Vice President John Wiencek for academic buildings and to Vice President of Finance and Administration Brian Foisy for non-academic buildings. If there is a need to close a building, a [template](#) for posting is available for your use. All closed buildings should have contact information on all public access exterior doors. Closures and change-in-service information can also be noted in the [Daily Register and MyUI newsletters](#).

Washington state has put a “Stay at Home” order in place. For U of I employees living in Washington, this means if you cannot work remotely, you can continue to physically work on campus if your job directly supports providing distance learning or providing meals to students. If you are unsure if your job qualifies, please contact your supervisor. If you continue working on campus, please practice social distancing.

These are unprecedented times and the questions we all have far outweigh the answers. Please talk with your supervisor, be kind and flexible and, most of all, take care of yourself and your families. We are the Vandal Family and we will get through this together. Also, know how much we appreciate all you have done, and all you will do on our behalf.

Keep Calm and Vandal On.

Scott Green

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