
Announcing our Transition to a Virtual Learning Environment

1 message

Office of the President <presidentsoffice@georgetown.edu>

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Reply-To: presidentsoffice@georgetown.edu

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Georgetown University Office of the President

Dear Members of the Georgetown University Community:

Over the past six weeks, you have received numerous messages regarding our University's ongoing efforts to grapple with the impacts of COVID-19—the novel coronavirus that first emerged in China and has been spreading throughout the world. I wish to begin by expressing my profound appreciation to the members of our community who are working tirelessly to help us respond to this challenge.

Throughout these weeks we have been guided by two fundamental commitments: (1) ensuring the health and safety of the campus community; and (2) ensuring the continuity of academic programs. In recent days, with the spread of the virus in the United States, including in the District of Columbia, we have determined new actions that are necessary for meeting these commitments.

Public health experts have provided important perspective on actions that we should take now to address the continued spread of the disease and to protect, to the best of our ability, the most vulnerable members of our community. It is imperative that we minimize the possibility of transmission and limit the possibility of “community spread” on our campuses.

Two actions that limit the spread of the virus are: first, reducing the *density* of social encounters—by limiting the number of members of our community on campus, especially in the residence halls, and reducing the size of gatherings; second, by practicing “*social distancing*”—ensuring that, in our public interactions with one another, we provide sufficient distance between ourselves and our colleagues.

No member of our University community has tested positive for COVID-19. In recent days a small number of members of our community may have been exposed to the novel

coronavirus, and have been informed by DC Health about appropriate steps they must take, given their specific circumstances. We informed you on Sunday about a patient being cared for at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital who tested positive for COVID-19. Subsequent to this, DC Health provided additional information to members of Christ Church, Georgetown, the Episcopal church in our neighborhood related to this case. We are monitoring this extremely closely.

Our University's Spring Break is concluding in the coming days, and we are taking the following steps at this time:

- **We are moving all classroom instruction for all of our schools to virtual learning environments. Beginning Monday, March 16th, we are suspending all in-person, face-to-face, on-campus classroom instruction. This will continue *until further notice*.** We will communicate updates regularly and will provide additional information on an ongoing basis.
- **We strongly encourage undergraduate students to return to their permanent addresses while this virtual learning environment is in place. Students should avoid returning to campus if possible or return to campus briefly to gather necessary items for the completion of academic work before departing to their permanent addresses. We understand that for some number of students there will be a compelling reason to remain on campus. Campus will remain open and key services will be available.**
- **We strongly encourage postponement of all gatherings and events. Further guidance for each campus will be forthcoming.**

We will continue to update you as the situation evolves. These updates can be found on our [webpage dedicated to addressing COVID-19](#).

This decision to move to virtual learning is taken after the most careful consideration. Our colleagues are working to ensure we can sustain educational continuity and faculty and students will be receiving guidance on managing this transition to virtual learning from the leadership of each school. I recognize that this transition to virtual learning will be very challenging and I am deeply grateful to our faculty for their dedication and commitment to our students during these difficult times.

In addition to the impact on students and faculty, this decision has implications for our staff colleagues. We are encouraging teleworking where possible given our current operating status, and our campus leadership will be providing additional information on a framework for teleworking in this environment. I wish to express my profound appreciation for the extraordinary efforts of the members of our staff who are responding with characteristic care for our community.

While sustaining our commitment to the above steps to strengthen our response to this challenge in public health, we will work to accommodate those students who have a need to remain on campus and will be following up with further guidance.

We recognize that certain members of our community are at higher risk than others from becoming

ill with this virus. All of us need to exercise the strongest precautions to reduce transmission.

We recognize that this transition to virtual instruction will introduce new challenges and we are putting in place the resources to be of support to all members of our community during this process. Following the decisions outlined in this letter, many questions will emerge. Guidance has been prepared by our colleagues that is intended to anticipate some of these questions, and will be provided in forthcoming correspondence. Answers to some frequently asked questions can be found on [our website](#).

We are a global community and the impacts of COVID-19 have affected many aspects of the life of our University community. We have confronted challenging moments before, and I am confident that, guided by our mission and ethos and the strength of our community, we will work our way through this moment with the care for one another and for the common good that has defined us throughout our history. Please join me in keeping those impacted by the virus in our thoughts, as we are called to respond with care and compassion for those within and beyond our community.

Sincerely,

John J. DeGioia