

MSU Community,

As you have likely heard, the number of positive cases in North Dakota jumped from 7 yesterday to 15 this morning. Across the Red River in Minnesota there are 89 as of today. Among the ND cases, 12 are in the Bismarck-Mandan area, one in Cass County (Fargo), and two here in Ward County. Additionally, the first instances of “community spread” have been announced in ND with several of the new cases this week. To that end, we are making some operational **changes to the MSU campus effective with the close of business today:**

1. **Beginning tomorrow morning, we will be in a “limited staffing” environment.** Please work with your direct supervisor regarding plans for whether you should be on-campus or work from home. Due to the importance of social distancing, we want to significantly limit the number of individuals on campus. If you are on campus in the days ahead, please practice good judgment in keeping your distance from others. For example, we held a President’s Staff meeting this morning; I moved that meeting (typically held at the conference table in my office) to the Fisher Room where the six of us had much more room to spread out thereby creating social distance. If you have interactions/meetings with fellow employees or students, please maintain the recommended distance of 6+ feet. We have a lot of good technology, so please use email, Skype/Zoom, Microsoft Teams, telephones/conference calls, etc to conduct business as much as possible while still fulfilling our basic mission. Further, we also know each office will need to operate based on the judgment of supervisors and VPs: some offices might need to rotate employees on an every other-day basis so the physical presence of the office can remain open, while other areas on campus can truly move to a remote environment.
2. **Effective tomorrow, the only MSU buildings that will be open will be Administration, the Student Center, the Library, the Dome, and the Seasonal Bubble.** The rest of the campus buildings will be locked, but faculty and staff working on-campus in the days ahead can certainly access those buildings as necessary. The bottom line with this decision is simply to minimize the number of external guests/visitors/students coming to campus who could potentially be carrying the virus. Additionally, please know we still have approximately 40-50 students in the residence halls, and so ensuring they have access to spaces such as the Library, Dome, Bubble, and Student Center is important for their own well-being and mental health.
3. **As of today, the plan remains for moving to online instruction on Tuesday, March 24 and remaining in that mode until traditional classes resume on Monday, April 6.** During the past couple days, I have been engaged in a number of conversations at a System-level regarding the potential for a longer period of delivering classes via distance technology. We are well aware of decisions that have been made in neighboring states and nationally as campuses have made decisions to complete the entire Spring semester online and/or cancel graduation ceremonies. We are not at that point yet. However, **I would strongly urge faculty to continue preparing for worst-case scenarios that might necessitate an extended distance-learning format.**

4. I will be sending another note out to our students later today announcing these updates to the physical campus operations.
5. Finally, please continue using good common sense in preventing the spread of germs and maintaining your personal health. **If you feel sick, please stay home and keep your distance from others.**

As for how long the limited staffing and building closures will continue, I do not have an answer for that. Please know it will continue until you hear otherwise. Things are changing and evolving so quickly each day, I am hesitant right now to announce an end date.

This email will likely elicit numerous other questions to which we may or may not have answers. We are working through these decisions on an hourly basis and trying to do the best we can with the information available. If you have thoughts, comments, questions, ideas, or criticisms, please email me or any of the other members of President's Staff directly. Your feedback is always welcome and appreciated.

Our COVID-19 page remains a good resource: <https://www.minotstateu.edu/health/covid-19/index.shtml>

Thanks for your continued efforts as we work our way through this,
Steve

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Go Beavers!