

MSU Community,

We continue monitoring the status of the COVID-19 virus and its impact locally, within North Dakota, in neighboring states, and across the US. As you may have heard, the ND Department of Health issued a press release within the past hour announcing two more individuals have tested positive for the virus: a second individual in Ward County and one in Cass County. Obviously, these numbers will continue to rise in the coming days and weeks, and so the continued best practices of personal hygiene, social distancing, avoiding crowds, and reducing non-essential travel and outings remain important for all of us.

A few other campus updates as of this afternoon:

1. A COVID-19 response team was established about 10 days ago and has met a couple times, including yesterday. The team is led by our Director of the Student Health Center, Melissa Fettig. Melissa remains in close contact with First District Health Unit and other state and local agencies to ensure MSU is taking appropriate steps and continuing to prepare for any uncertainties. The team maintains a website that I would encourage all MSU employees to monitor on a daily basis (it also maintains a list of canceled/postponed events): <https://www.minotstateu.edu/health/covid-19/>
2. We continue monitoring events, meetings, and gatherings at MSU. The policy communicated last Friday remains in effect – large gatherings (over 50 attendees) are not allowed until at least April 6, and smaller gatherings are being evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The overall goal is to continue heeding the CDC's warnings related to social distancing and minimizing crowd sizes. We are trying to take the appropriate steps, even for internal gatherings, to adjust and minimize the opportunities for large group interactions; for example, today's traditional Spring Break potluck in the Beaver Dam was canceled as was tomorrow's meeting of University Cabinet (a meeting with 40-50 attendees).
3. During President's Staff this morning, we discussed the actions some campuses in ND have taken including having employees work remotely. Several campuses, especially those in the eastern side of the state near the Minnesota border, have taken that action (keep in mind, Minnesota now has 60 confirmed cases while North Dakota has three). Several other campuses in the state, including Minot State and Dakota College at Bottineau, have not yet moved in this direction. While that could become a reality as this situation evolves, as of today we will continue operating the way we have the past two days – with the campus open and employees reporting for work as normal. As the parent of two school-age children, I fully realize the impact of the state's closure of the K-12 system and the additional burdens that puts on some members of our MSU team. If you are in that situation and have the ability to work remotely this week, please work with your supervisor and respective vice-president to facilitate those accommodations. If working remotely is simply not an option to accomplish your duties, then please take annual or dependent leave as appropriate. We will be reviewing our options in this area in the days ahead, and will closely be monitoring what the state recommends with respect to the K-12 situation for next week.

4. In providing flexibility so faculty have adequate time to prepare for the start of online delivery, **we will be extending Spring Break for students by one additional day and begin the online instructional format on Tuesday, March 24.** This will allow an extra day on Monday so the CEL staff can provide additional training and preparation for those faculty who require it. I will be sending an email to students later this afternoon alerting them of the date change.

I think that is all for now. Things continue to evolve and change rapidly with this fluid situation, so please keep monitoring your email and the MSU COVID-19 webpage. My thanks and appreciation for all that each of you are doing in working to ensure we continue serving our students throughout this unusual set of circumstances.

Thanks,

Steve

*Steven W. Shirley, PhD*

*President*

*Minot State University*

*701-858-3300*

[www.minotstateu.edu](http://www.minotstateu.edu)

**Go Beavers!**