

Good Morning:

At the beginning of our academic year, I don't imagine any of us thought about the disruption that we are now facing nationally and at MCLA as a result of the COVID-19 Coronavirus. I am grateful for all the work our faculty, staff, and students have been doing as we continue to work toward our collective goal of helping students succeed.

It is moments like these, when a community comes together to brainstorm different ways of working on behalf of others, that defines not just American higher education, but it defines what I know is so wonderful about MCLA. Thank you all, again, for what you are doing to help us manage this disruption.

Let me offer some information that has emerged over the last 24 hours.

Status of MCLA Community Health:

- At this time, we are unaware of any MCLA community members who are presumptively positive or positive for COVID-19.
- There have been students who have visited Health Services concerned that they have COVID-19 but after conversations with the health professionals it was determined they were not exposed. Two employees have self-isolated. One staff member had been exposed to a person who was tested for the virus but the test came back negative. Another staff member had traveled internationally and self-isolated this week because someone in his/her/their office has a compromised immune system.

Academic Calendar/Academic Planning:

- Many of you have asked and/or wondered if classroom-based courses will resume on March 30. As of today, this remains MCLA's plan. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is an evolving situation and what emerges over the next few weeks may alter those plans. If our plan changes, I will alert you as soon as possible.
- I have also been asked about Commencement Exercises and if we plan to hold them. The answer is yes. The format may be different than what we have known, but I am planning on hosting the 121st Commencement Exercises at the completion of the spring semester. Again, as the date approaches and there is more clarity about the pandemic's effect, I will share more information with you.
- During the week of March 23-27, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Academic Affairs will offer to all faculty a series of workshops on Canvas tools and pedagogical best practices for distance learning. We will also have classrooms dedicated for faculty use to develop online content, including videos and audio of lecture material in Bowman Hall. Additionally, the Freel Library staff will be available to work with faculty members on sourcing and uploading materials.
- Academic Affairs has administered a survey to faculty soliciting their ideas about technology tools and software that would be helpful to them for MCLA to possibly acquire.

Campus Events:

- Starting Friday night, March 13, 2020, large (50+) on-campus gatherings are discouraged, besides those essential to college operations. Between now and April 10, all group activities, lectures, performances, etc., will be canceled or postponed. While meetings essential to core College functions are permitted, we are recommending that people meet remotely or virtually when possible. We know many of you have already begun to adopt these practices. We recognize the need for group meetings related to College operations, governance, collective bargaining, student governance, department meetings, the Board of Trustees, etc. If you are unsure if your gathering or meeting is considered essential to College operations, please err on the side of caution and check with your division leadership. For the most up-to-date information please refer to MCLA's website and our campus events app, Presence.

MASCAC/Athletic Programs:

- The Massachusetts State Universities and the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference (MASCAC) have been monitoring the COVID-19 outbreak. Earlier this week, Governor Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency in Massachusetts as a result of COVID-19. Yesterday, the NCAA canceled all remaining winter and spring NCAA Championships. Based on the evolving COVID-19 public health threat and in the best interest of our student-athletes and communities, the MASCAC will suspend all MASCAC institution athletic activity indefinitely. Teams currently playing out of state shall remain an institutional decision.

Planning for the Future:

- The MCLA Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) continues to meet daily for updates and planning. Additionally, there have been daily discussions between my office and the Council of Presidents, the executive staff, the Department of Higher Education, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and/or the Executive Office of Education. These conversations typically have been focused on the administration's position on the pandemic, guidance on procedures, and best practices for managing the crisis.
- Outcomes of those conversations have included the decision to cancel classes the week after spring break, offering professional development on alternative modalities for providing course content, professional development on contingency planning for staff and administrators, the decision to cancel athletic competitions, practices, and travel, canceling college-sponsored international and domestic travel, and the focus on resuming classes March 30.
- A listserv for designated campus points of contact has been created to share campus level information with our peers in the State University system to stay abreast of emerging best practices and for consistent communication.
- Facilities staff will be doing additional cleaning of campus facilities during spring break and the week classes are canceled.

For Students:

- Faculty will not be assigning work or expecting any assignments to be completed the week that classes are canceled (March 23-27).
- We recognize the disruption you are encountering and are working hard to preserve continuity of resources and services. To that end, all on-campus federal work-study and campus trust

funded student employees will receive pay for the week classes are cancelled. This pay will be calculated based on hours scheduled from March 14-29. Please contact your supervisor with questions.

- While we want to be sure to best position MCLA operationally to respond to the challenges we may face in the coming days, it's also vital that we take the time to take care of ourselves and each other. I understand it is a stressful situation for everyone and feelings of anxiety are perfectly natural and expected at this time. I encourage you to utilize resources the CDC has made available [at Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19](#).

For Staff:

We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic causes challenges for all of us to maintain a normal life. It also creates challenges for a college to maintain operations while doing our part to assist in mitigation. Beginning March 16 and until March 30, we encourage employees who can to work from home, when possible, considering the following guidelines:

- Employees need to propose a scope of work outlining what work they can accomplish from home during this two-week period, for either all or part of this period. They need to verify that they have the technical capacity at home (i.e.: internet access) for that work. Not all proposals can be approved, but where possible, we will do our best to honor individual requests.
- Essential employees will still be expected to report to campus as usual. Essential AFSCME employees were notified of their status as essential in October, 2019. If you are an APA member or are a non-unit professional, and you aren't sure if you qualify as an essential employee during this time period, please check with your supervisor.
- As College offices will remain open during these two weeks, supervisors must ensure that they maintain appropriate on-campus coverage for their department(s), as determined in consultation with division leadership.
- There will be training and technical assistance workshops and other professional development opportunities for staff and administrators regarding creating and implementing contingency plans in departments to assure continued operations during emergency situations. Certain employees are encouraged to be available for these opportunities. Division leadership can verify who those employees are.
- Please note MCLA will continue these practices for this designated two-week period unless otherwise guided by the Office of Employee Relations (OER).
- If you would like to consider using some accrued time from March 16-March 27, please consult with your supervisor about that possibility.

If you have a question or concern about something you have heard that just doesn't seem right, let me know and I'll do my best to provide accurate information, or offer my thoughts, or chase down an answer for you. My phone number in the office is extension 5201. I will also continue to host visitors to the office if you want to stop by.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our community, and it is my hope that you continue to stay safe and healthy.

Jaimie