

Dear MCLA Students and Colleagues:

During a call yesterday between Massachusetts higher education institutions and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD shared with us that Governor Charlie Baker has determined that colleges and universities in Massachusetts should cancel any international travel plans for students this spring, even for destinations that are currently considered low-risk. Governor Baker's decision is based upon guidance from the CDC over concerns about the outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 strain of the coronavirus.

Moreover, there are concerns that students, faculty, and staff returning from trips abroad could be mandated to self-quarantine for 14 days, even though they might not have contracted the virus. Such a disruption could prevent students from completing their semester of study.

As a result of the guidance from CDC, the position of the Governor, and the possible risks of disrupting students' completion of studies this semester, I am disheartened to tell you that all international trips sponsored by MCLA for this semester must be cancelled out of an abundance of care for our students and colleagues.

I have asked Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Adrienne Wootters, to work with travel course faculty and the registrar to help students effected by this decision to complete the credits they registered for this semester. Students should speak with their course instructor about making plans to complete the course.

In the near future, MCLA will determine the process for reimbursing students for travel expenses that are not returned, and we will communicate that information to them and their faculty.

I know this decision will disappoint all of the students and faculty planning to travel: I am sorry that I had to make this decision. It is a decision, however, that is necessary to prevent possible exposure to the virus and to prevent the possibility of disrupting students' semester of study.

JB

James F. Birge, Ph.D.

President

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

413.662.5201

375 Church Street

North Adams, MA 01247
