

March 11, 2020

Members of the SIU System Community –

I had imagined my first message to everyone throughout the System would be more of a welcome and introduction, but with the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus, we will have to put that on hold for more important and immediate matters.

As I shared with our Board of Trustees last night, I have been working with leadership from both campuses on planning and communications relative to the COVID-19 outbreak. Because the situation has changed multiple times throughout the last couple of days, this has been particularly challenging. However, our campus leadership has worked diligently to ensure we are best prepared to respond in a way that protects our students, faculty and staff. This must be our primary goal.

Fortunately, we have no confirmed cases of the virus among our faculty, staff and students, but in accordance with the latest information from experts and out of an abundance of caution, we are making several decisions to protect the health of everyone.

Across the SIU system, we will be extending spring break for on-ground students by one week through March 22 to allow faculty time to move to online or other forms of alternative instruction where possible until further notice. During this period, students are encouraged to remain engaged in learning activities and should consult class syllabi for guidance on readings and other assignments. Additionally, look for any communication from your faculty members. Students in programs with required clinical, practica, student teaching or other field experiences should consult with their program director or department chair for guidance during this period of time. Students in online programs or enrolled in online courses should continue with their work, per the syllabus and course schedule.

During this time period in which students are being asked to participate in social distancing, the Universities and System office will remain open and will continue normal business operations and employees will report to work as usual. However, anyone who suspects they may have been exposed, should follow CDC guidelines and University direction regarding self-quarantine.

You will soon be receiving emails from your respective campus leaders with more details specific to each location. While some of the details will still need to be worked over the next couple of days, we wanted to let you know as soon as possible the decisions that have been made at this point.

In order to provide everyone with the most up-to-date information, the campuses have put together websites that provide detailed information on everything from travel restrictions to general advice on risk and prevention. Here are the links:

SIU Carbondale: <https://shc.siu.edu/coronavirus/>.

SIU School of Medicine: <https://www.siumed.edu/coronavirus/risk-and-prevention.html>.

SIU Edwardsville: <http://siue.edu/about/announcements/faq-coronavirus.shtml>

These websites are constantly updated as we get new information.

We are coordinating between both campuses to provide as much consistency as possible and to eliminate as much confusion as we can. Here, the strength of the SIU System is giving us a better opportunity to share the best practices of both universities and to assist each other in our efforts. And while not everything will be the same in Carbondale, Springfield, Edwardsville, Alton and East St. Louis, our common plans and procedures will hopefully make the coming days easier on us all.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through the coming weeks. I'm sure there will be more changes in the days and weeks ahead, but by working together we will make decisions that best support everyone in the SIU System. Thank you for all you are doing.

Dan Mahony

SIU System President