

COVID-19/Novel Coronavirus Update from the Provost

March 11, 2020

Members of the University community,

While there are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our province, our city, or on our campuses, the University of Regina has been working on its containment and contingency planning to minimize any potential impact on our students, faculty and staff. Our University Emergency Operations Centre has been working with public health officials and our post-secondary partners to monitor the situation and prepare for possible outcomes.

Our focus is on the health and safety of our entire campus community. This requires that we all work together to limit exposure and transmission of the virus by elevating our personal hygiene habits and practising social distancing.

Based on the latest information provided to us by the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Public Health Agency of Canada the University is taking, or preparing to take, the following actions:

Students, Faculty or Staff who become ill:

While the University has no authority – nor is it currently recommended by health authorities - to implement quarantine or isolation requirements, we strongly advise anyone who is feeling ill to stay at home.

In discussions this morning with Deans, we are considering the need to adjust syllabi and course requirements for students. As always, students can seek accommodation in the event of an extended illness or absence.

Closing the University/Cancelling classes or final exams:

The University of Regina never truly “closes” as we have more than 1,000 students who live on-campus and require supports and services. At this time, there is no indication from federal or provincial health authorities that classes need to be cancelled. However, we continue to monitor the situation and planning is underway should we need to reschedule or cancel face-to-face classes and/or final exams.

Moving courses and/or exams on-line:

The University is considering and preparing for a wide variety of measures that may be necessary at some point, including but not limited to:

- alternative delivery of courses, such as on-line or via video-conferencing;
- options for adjusting syllabi and course requirements for students;
- alternatives for students to write final exams which are normally held in the gymnasiums, etc.;
- academic coordination between all campuses and academic partners including regional colleges and satellite campuses;
- and managing potential impacts on the University's research programs.

A COVID-19 Academic sub-committee under the leadership of the Dean of Nursing, Dr. David Gregory, has been formed to proactively manage these and other issues.

Self-isolation or quarantine planning for students who live on-campus:

Plans and proposed locations are in place should students who live in one of our residences need to isolate themselves.

Individuals who are in self-isolation should monitor their symptoms and immediately report worsening of symptoms to a health care provider or public health authority for further assessment. If it is determined that transfer to an acute care facility is required, instructions will be provided regarding transportation (e.g. by ambulance or private vehicle).

Other contingency planning underway for those living on-campus includes:

- provision of food and other essential services;
- ensuring adequate supplies of cleaning and other essential products; and
- implementing stronger protocols/procedures for disinfecting/cleaning.

University-hosted events/lectures/sports/large gatherings:

As with classes on campus, there is no indication from health authorities that events need to be cancelled or postponed at this time. Event organizers may want to consult with Health, Safety & Wellness to go over health considerations and recommendations when deciding whether to proceed with any new events. Events already scheduled can still move forward, although personal hygiene and social distancing guidelines should be considered and communicated to those attending. Those individuals who wish to avoid large gatherings are certainly within their rights to do so.

Travel:

We have communicated extensively regarding restrictions placed on University-organized or sanctioned travel. Please see our full travel guidelines on our website here:

<https://www.uregina.ca/hr/hsw/Coronavirus/index.html>.

All students who intend to travel through UR International Study Abroad & Global Mobility programs are required to consult and obtain the approval of UR International.

The decision to travel for personal reasons is your choice and you are responsible for your personal safety abroad.

Future travel/Exchange programs/Student visas:

The international travel situation is extremely fluid at the moment. It is difficult to predict the impact the global pandemic of COVID-19 might have four weeks from now, much less four months from now. No matter where you are planning to travel or when, you are advised to consult travel.gc.ca, which is the Government of Canada's official source of destination-specific travel information. It provides important advice to help travellers make informed decisions and travel safely while abroad.

If you are travelling or planning to travel through any Study Abroad & Global Mobility program, please inform UR International Study Abroad & Global Mobility office immediately.

The University is also:

- working with our exchange students, host universities and associated agencies to ensure that any exchanges that are postponed can be rescheduled or revised; and
- providing flexibility for international students who have been accepted to the University but who may be unable to start when originally planned due to delay in visa or travel restrictions.

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has taken special measures to help temporary and permanent residents and applicants affected by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). For more information, please visit IRCC's website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/coronavirus-special-measures.html>.

Please contact UR International Student Services Office at College West 109 or call 1-855-874-1700 if you would like to discuss your situation.

Protecting yourself and others:

The following advice can help reduce the risk of infection or spreading infection to others:

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- if soap and water is not available, 60-90% alcohol-based hand rubs (hand sanitizer) can be used to clean hands if they are not visibly soiled. If they are visibly soiled, you can use an alcohol-based disposable hand wipe to remove the dirt and then use an alcohol-based hand rub;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
- stay home if you are sick;
- avoid close contact with people who may be ill;
- when coughing or sneezing;
 - cover your mouth and nose with the crease of your elbow or tissues to reduce the spread of droplets,
 - immediately dispose of any tissues you have used into the garbage as soon as possible and wash your hands afterwards,
 - and avoid visiting people in hospitals or long-term care centres if you are sick.
- In addition, before going to a doctor's office, health clinic, or emergency room, people with respiratory illness should call ahead to describe their symptoms, travel history and any contact they may have had with a sick person. If you need emergency medical care, call 911;
- And close physical, social contact such as shaking hands or embracing should be avoided and replaced with slight bows or even elbow bumps.

Hand-sanitizer stations:

Health, Safety & Wellness recently became aware that the hand sanitizer currently available in the dispensers on our main campus is a non-alcohol based solution which carries limitations in protecting against COVID-19. The University is working hard to source a new supply of alcohol-based sanitizer as quickly as possible. This could take up to three to four weeks, but we are making every effort to speed the process up. College Avenue campus, Innovation Place – Regina, the Federated Colleges, and other University of Regina campuses in the province are not impacted by this.

In the meantime, health authorities maintain that washing your hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and water remains the most effective way to protect yourself and others. Hand sanitizer should only be considered as an alternative when soap and water is not readily available. Proper coughing/sneezing etiquette should also be observed, and close physical, social contact such as shaking hands or embracing should be avoided and replaced with slight bows or even elbow bumps.

Student information forum:

The University of Regina Students' Union is in the early stages of planning a public forum to provide information to and answer questions from students. Members of the University administration will participate in this forum. Details will be shared once the organizers have finalized them.

In conclusion:

The latest information specific to the University of Regina, along with answers to a number of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), can be found here on the University's dedicated web page: uregina.ca/hsw/Coronavirus

Links to the latest medical and health information can be found there as well.

I would like to remind everyone at the University of Regina that we are basing our preparedness planning and our decision-making on the guidelines and recommendations of government and medical officials with the training, knowledge, and expertise required to manage emerging health issues such as the spread of COVID-19. We will continue to monitor the situation, put our plans into action, and provide updates as the situation changes and future decisions are made.

We know this is a challenging and stressful time, and I would like to thank you all for coming together as we work to get through this by doing what we have always done at the University of Regina – look out for one another.

Sincerely,

Thomas Chase

Provost and Vice-President (Academic)