

March 16, 2020

McGovern College Faculty, Staff, and Students:

The city of Houston has adopted strong measures to stem the spread of COVID-19. Health experts and scientists nationwide are asking that all citizens do their part by adjusting their daily activities and lifestyles to slow transmission of the virus. The sooner we take strong action and do our part, the sooner we can get past this period of significant uncertainty and heightened alarm.

There is, furthermore, broad consensus that arts facilities pose an especially significant risk for exacerbating transmission of the virus, simply due to the nature of those facilities and the types of activity occurring in them. Scientific opinion on the coronavirus right now tells us that the virus lives for relatively prolonged periods in public spaces and on porous surfaces. The latter are common in arts facilities.

Therefore I am announcing the restriction of student access to McGovern College of the Arts facilities beginning Friday at noon. Students should not plan to work in college buildings, studios, labs, and other facilities after that time. Buildings will be locked and swipe card access will be disabled.

Withholding the restriction on student access until noon Friday will allow the necessary time for students to enter the buildings and collect equipment and work, as needed. Students should plan to use the time between now and then to collect items from the buildings that you will need to work off campus. There is no need to collect all of your belongings; simply collect items that will allow you to finish work in progress. Your Directors will be in contact with you shortly, in separate email communications, with information about scheduling time to collect belongings.

The restrictions will continue until we have the information we need to make an informed decision that it is safe to return to work in the facilities.

I understand that in some cases the impact of this decision on students may be significant. Access to specialized fabrication equipment or musical instruments will be temporarily lost, for example. Study spaces and computer equipment will be temporarily inaccessible.

The MFA thesis show in the Blaffer Museum will be postponed: there is simply no way to mount the show and account for the public health risk to students, faculty, and staff. I have discussed this with the entire leadership team in the college, and we have committed that from this point forward we will be putting all of our energy and efforts into how to present the show online and, to whatever extent it is feasible and practical to do so, on an alternative date in the Blaffer Museum. Students will be given every opportunity to participate in the shaping of these plans. School of Art Director David Pulitzer will be in touch with you separately with more information.

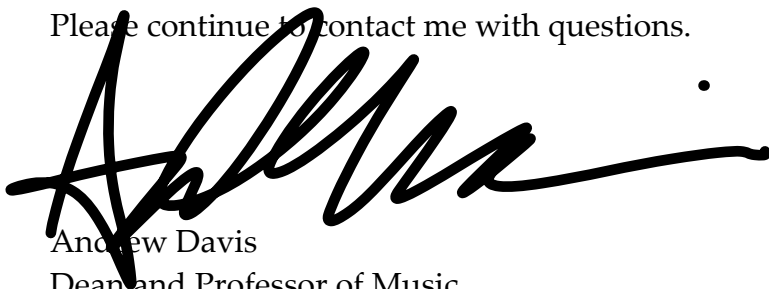
The Music Library will provide services remotely until the Moores School of Music building reopens. Music Library Coordinator Madelyn Washington and her staff have plans in place and are ready to move to a remote format to ensure continuity of services. Madelyn will be communicating to you the details of these plans within the next 24 hours.

Student employees who may still have been working in the buildings will be impacted as well. As I mentioned yesterday, we are at work as we speak on determining alternative work arrangements to allow student employees to work remotely and continue to be paid. This is a very important issue to all of us.

I know that there are many instances of faculty members having already made alternative instructional plans (including alternative plans for studio-based classes and the like) that do not require students to have access to the facilities. I know that if faculty members have not yet made such plans, they will be able to do so in advance of the Friday, March 20 noon deadline for notifying students of instructional plans.

I appreciate all of you for your extraordinary flexibility in a situation that continues to evolve rapidly and requires equally rapid response. I appreciate everyone's concern for the health and well-being of the entire McGovern College of the Arts community. I appreciate, above all, the work that all of you are doing to manage the situation and to support each other at what is a most disruptive time for everyone, personally and professionally.

Please continue to contact me with questions.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Davis', is written over the typed name and title below it.

Andrew Davis  
Dean and Professor of Music  
Cullen Foundation Endowed Chair