

March 19, 2020

McGovern College students:

Here's my update for Thursday, March 19.

President's announcements today

There have been continued developments today from the President's office, and I want to call your attention to these. From your perspective, the most significant will be:

(1) the president has announced that all instruction will continue online through the end of the spring semester, regardless of what happens in the situation around us; this will be welcome news to many, as some of you have expressed concern about the potential "back and forth" that might be caused by a shift back to traditional instruction.

Remember that you will hear from your faculty members by tomorrow, if you haven't heard already, regarding plans for continuity of instruction and online delivery of content.

And (2) graduation ceremonies have been postponed until late summer or early fall. I understand that this will be a disappointment for many. I feel it too. It's similar to my decision yesterday to close the arts facilities to students: the public health concern is the top priority right now, and we don't want to risk anyone's health and safety by trying to hold an event of this size. Decisions about commencement need to be made right now, and we simply don't have enough information right now to tell us that holding commencement will be safe. It's a really difficult decision, but one that we had to make.

Students will have the opportunity to participate in a commencement ceremony at a future date. Everyone will get to walk and shake hands with me. I look certainly forward to it.

Library services

We have now implemented continuity of service plans for the music library, which will be closed as a result of the closure of arts facilities to students beginning tomorrow at noon (and as a result of the University Libraries' decision to close the branch libraries on campus). Music librarian Madelyn Washington has outlined plans in detail; I have attached a copy of her email to this update and will also post her email online at <https://uh.edu/kgmca/covid-19-dean-communications/>.

Architecture, Design and Art librarian Catherine Essinger has already published similar plans for the Architecture, Design and Art Library; I have also attached those plans here and will post them online at the same URL also.

I remind everyone of the databases that are available online from the University of Houston Libraries, at <https://guides.lib.uh.edu/databases>. Accessing these databases for research materials (finding articles on JSTOR, for example) by accessing through the university libraries will work better than trying to access these from a third-party website. You will be asked to log in; use your cougar ID and password when prompted.

Note that the M.D. Anderson library remains open, on limited hours (until 5:45 on weekdays, 4:45 on weekends) for the remainder of this week and returning to normal hours next week (we of March 23). Bring your student ID; you will be required to show it to get in. This is safety measure, to limit potential exposure to those of you using the library. It is possible that the library might implement additional restrictions; if so, I will inform you as I know more.

Closure of arts facilities

Remember the important deadline of tomorrow at noon for closure of the arts facilities to students. This includes all of the buildings housing McGovern College of the Arts facilities. I encourage you to take from the building whatever you need to complete work from off campus for the rest of the semester. (You don't need to completely move out of the building; just take what you need to complete your coursework and projects.)

If you are away from Houston and cannot access the buildings in time, please contact me and briefly explain your situation and we will make every effort to find a solution.

Technology and software

I have received some technical questions about the availability of software and issues with logging into videoconferencing software and the like. The most important advice I can pass along is that you must be reading your email address that ends in "@central.uh.edu." All university communications are sent to that email address; all software licenses are written assuming that you will be using that account when you use the campus-licensed software.

For many of you this will not be a problem; for others, especially those who read email exclusively from a third-party provider (gmail, for example), this can be an obstacle for aligning with the requirements for keeping up with online instruction during this time. Many of your faculty members, for example, will be adding you as members on the videoconferencing software Microsoft Teams; this doesn't work if you aren't using your account that ends in "@central.uh.edu."

Many of you might not know (until now) that you have an email account ending in @central.uh.edu. To access this mailbox (and adjust the settings, etc.), simply log in to AccessUH and click on the Office365 link that you see there. Log in according to the instructions if you're asked to do so. Once logged in, you'll see an icon for "Outlook," which will open your @central.uh.edu mailbox in the web-based Microsoft Outlook application.

Remember that if you're using the email account ending in "@uh.edu," this is simply a mail forwarding service and not an actual account address. You must use your "@central.uh.edu" account address in order to log in to the software online.

You can always visit <https://uh.edu/infotech/> and search for answers to technical questions. The site is very helpful.

As I mentioned, many of your faculty members will be inviting you to join a “team” in Microsoft Teams. (A “team” is simply a group of people—all of the students and the instructor in a class, for example.) This is the university’s preferred videoconferencing software, and the university license provides access to everyone on campus. You may receive an invitation from your professor to join Teams, with an ID code that would be sent to you. ATC Manager Heather Bisesti has created a very helpful document that explains how to access Teams and join a team using your code; I have attached that document to this email, and will post it on my covid-19 communications page along with this email.

Finally (for tonight)

Please note that the campus has implemented two new reporting requirements, aligned with the requirements of the city public health authorities: (1) faculty, staff and students who have reason to believe that they have been exposed to an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must report that information to the university; and (2) faculty, staff and students who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 must report that diagnosis to the university. If this applies to you, first please accept my best wishes for a fast recovery and please tell me what I can do to assist you; and second, you may find the appropriate reporting form at <https://uh.edu/covid-19/>.

Please, everyone stay safe and healthy. Follow the direction from the public health officials. The governor issued orders this afternoon that will close whatever schools, restaurants, bars, gyms, etc. that were still open. Don’t go out socializing in large crowds (and don’t go to the beach in Corpus Christi, as I am seeing on the news feeds!). Wash your hands; if you are entering the buildings to retrieve belongings, you may see temporary hand sanitizers stations set up in the access areas. Use them. Let’s all do our part to slow the spread of the virus. The sooner we do it, the sooner we return to normal.

Please continue to be in touch---I enjoy hearing from all of you. Continue to ask me questions and I will continue to answer them.

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