



Office of the Chancellor
THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

March 13, 2020

RE: CORRECTED Latest on Texas A&M System Actions in Response to COVID-19 Spread

I wanted personally to reach out to our students, faculty and staff during this difficult time. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose significant challenges and is likely to remain a concern for the next several weeks. By now most of us have heard the basic public health recommendations we should follow, including:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid large public gatherings and exercise social distancing, if possible.
- Cover your mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue, then discard the tissue in a contained trash bin. If no tissue available, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Seek medical attention if you believe you have been exposed or present with symptoms. Call ahead before presenting at a doctor's office or emergency room.

The Texas A&M System has just announced plans to suspend classes on all campuses throughout the System for the week following spring break. Faculty and staff are being asked to use that time to plan for delivery of online/alternative education options for all students for the remainder of the semester or until the current situation changes. For those universities with spring break during the week of 3/16-20, we realize you may or may not need to suspend classes the following week. Existing online courses may continue as planned, at the university's discretion.

Campuses across the Texas A&M System will remain open during this time, including student housing and food services, unless circumstances change, and at the President's discretion. Although most of our students live off-campus (at Texas A&M it is 70 percent), many would have nowhere to go if we closed dorms. We are looking at ways to ensure that our dorms are safe places where students can stay and have housing, food, Internet and other services available while they continue their studies. Across all campuses, the offices of student health services and student housing will coordinate to provide basic screening and health triage with the voluntary assistance of clinical faculty members.

As of March 13th, no international travel is permitted and no domestic travel is permitted unless deemed mission critical. All athletic contests are being cancelled until further notice.

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Texas A&M agencies and system offices may move to skeleton crew staffing, as appropriate, for five days beginning March 16th through the 20th. Each Vice Chancellor or Agency Director may designate staffing levels needed to maintain critical business operations and continuity. This plan will be revisited by March 19th. This does not apply to TDEM given its emergency management responsibilities, or to certain divisions of Agrilife, TEEEX, TFS, and TVMDL, as determined by agency leadership.

These actions, on the heels of our earlier responses, are necessary to slow the spread of the COVID 19, reduce the burden on the healthcare system and provide researchers, including many at our very own Texas A&M Health Science Center, more time to learn about this virus and create strategies to combat and defeat it.

Experts at the Texas A&M Health Science Center (TAMHSC) are actively involved in helping to contain and mitigate the spread of the infection. Several Aggie scientists with the School of Public Health have been asked by the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to assist in modeling the potential spread of the virus across the state and the nation. This analysis is being used by TDEM and the Governor's office to assist with the State's response to the growing presence of the coronavirus in Texas. Nim Kidd, TDEM's Chief who answers to the Governor, is also a Vice Chancellor with the A&M System who is advising and leading our efforts.

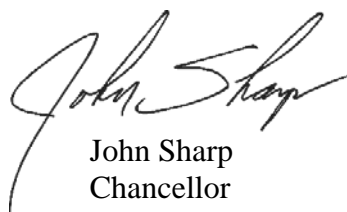
According to Dr. Amy Waer, Interim Dean of the Texas A&M College of Medicine, the incubation period for this virus appears to range between two days to two weeks following exposure. "Patients with the virus are reporting respiratory illness with fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The severity of illness in most cases is mild. If you think you've been exposed to the virus or are experiencing any of these symptoms, call your health care provider for medical advice before proceeding to a healthcare facility." Dr. Waer stressed to me, "We all have a responsibility to ourselves, our family, friends, co-workers, our students, and our community to not spread this disease. If you're sick, self-isolate."

Dr. Ken Ramos, Associate Vice President for Research, TAMHSC and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Health Services and a specialist in pulmonary medicine told me "There is no specific treatment for COVID-19. Patients diagnosed with this illness will continue to be treated based upon their unique presentation and the severity of their illness."

I'm proud of the work being done by faculty and staff across the System on behalf of our state, our students and our communities. As we have done before, the Texas A&M System will lead by example and we will play a major role in helping Texas work through this crisis.

Please, take care of yourself, your family and friends. If you feel sick, take actions to not spread the disease, especially among the elderly or those with underlying health challenges. Prepare, but don't panic. Together we will weather this storm, and we'll take what we learn to be even better prepared in the future.

Sincerely,



John Sharp
Chancellor