

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students:

Last night, we were notified of Governor Kelly and Kansas Education Commissioner Dr. Randy Watson's recommendation to close K-12 public schools this coming week to allow for coordinated and comprehensive planning. We remain committed to the underlying goal of all our efforts and decision-making since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak: **safeguarding the health of our students, faculty, and staff**. In striving to do so, we have also remained committed to our guiding principle that policies and decisions in response to COVID-19 should be informed by and aligned with, local, state, and national medical authorities and public health experts.

UPDATED POLICY GUIDANCE

With the above in mind, please be aware of the interim policies set forth herein, which are to be **effective March 16, 2020**:

CLASSES, HOUSING, AND SERVICES

- **Classes the week of March 16-20**
After consultation with Student Health Center, our Critical Incident Policy Group ("CIPG"), and various others, we have decided that **all FHSU on-campus classes will be canceled, effective at the end of the business, 4:30 pm, today March 16 through March 20, 2020**. All in-person classes will be a transition to online delivery effective March 30, 2020. Online classes scheduled this week will continue.
- **Transition to Online Continues**. All in-person classes will be canceled for the week of March 16-20, and will transition to online effective March 30, 2020, per our prior announcement. Classes that are already online will continue as scheduled. The Office of the Provost and the deans' offices will continue to coordinate this transition for all academic programs, in coordination with TILT. Additional issues surrounding clinicals, labs and practicums will continue to be addressed in their respective departments. We intend to re-evaluate this decision on a weekly basis, but at this point, **we continue to fully anticipate that the change to online delivery will last for the remainder of the spring semester**.
- **Campus Housing Developments and Social Distancing**.
The University remains open, but **students currently residing on campus should prepare to move home by the end of day, 5:00 pm, Tuesday, March 17, 2020** (bringing all personal belongings with them, including any textbooks and course material) and thereafter **remain at home during this period of on-line delivery**. Obviously, not all students will be able to do so, and we will continue to work through the Residential Life team to accommodate students. Please contact Residential Life at srl@fhsu.edu or call (785) 628-4245 with questions. We ask students not to return to campus during this period. All students are urged to practice **social distancing, avoid any gatherings of 10 or more people on or off campus, and avoid the common living areas**.

Residential Life and Student Fiscal Services will automatically process refunds for room and board for students checking out of on-campus housing. All refunds will be based on the student's official check-out date. On-campus services (residence halls, dining, etc.) may be limited for those with compelling reasons to be present, such as international students or students who otherwise lack online capability. Students remaining on campus will receive moving instructions from Residential Life .

- **University Services.**

University housing, computing services, food service, health clinics, and counseling services, and all other aspects of the University will remain open at this time, subject to further decisions, social distancing measures, and any CDC, KDHE, or local health official guidance regarding self-isolation or self-quarantine requirements. To that end, if you are considered high risk (e.g., currently sick or suffering from chronic health conditions, have traveled to areas with outbreaks or otherwise identified as high risk by CDC or KDHE, or have potentially been exposed to someone with COVID-19) you should stay home until you have consulted your healthcare provider and are released from any self-isolation or quarantine period recommended. Again, all students are urged to practice social distancing and avoid any gatherings of 10 or more people on or off campus.

EMPLOYEES, TRAVEL, AND EVENTS

- **University Employees**

The university is currently continuing normal daily operations and all employees should continue to report to work at their usual work location and scheduled time, subject to special instructions for high risk individuals identified below. **The University does not have an approved telecommuting policy and as such telecommuting is not permitted at this time.** ELT, Student Health and CIPG are drafting guidelines and policies to govern telecommuting and related issues if it becomes necessary.

Faculty and staff are expected to report to work unless:

- You have been advised to self-isolate or quarantine because of travel or potential exposure. This would include guidance from CDC, KDHE, and local health officials.
- You have chronic health conditions or are in another at-risk group considered more susceptible to COVID-19
- You are sick.

Supervisors should exercise judgment and flexibility when considering requests related to operating procedures and employee requests. **Please see the attached FAQ sheet from Human Resources for more information for employees and supervisors.**

- **University Travel Suspended.** After consideration of CDC, State Department, and KDHE advisories, all university-sponsored travel is suspended until further notice.

We strongly discourage all non-essential personal travel and may require employees or students who do travel to such locations to self-quarantine upon return based on guidelines and recommendations from local, state, or federal health authorities, or Student Health. Please work with the Business Office on matters relating to travel reimbursements and related issues.

- **University Events Suspended.**

All University gatherings and events on and off campus are suspended until further notice. This includes events sponsored by any recognized student organization and other affiliated groups and includes smaller events like campus visits and tours. Whenever possible, we will seek opportunities to enable some events through virtual means and platforms.

- **Testing Services.**

At this time national ACT testing has been canceled. FHSU Testing Services will continue to accommodate FHSU students on a case by case basis.

- **Commencement**

A decision about commencement is planned by March 27, 2020.

- **Department Communications**

Department communications regarding COVID-19 should not be sent out without consultation with ELT. Please communicate your concerns and questions through your supervisor and division leaders.

- **Business Processes**

No decisions regarding business processes and operations should be made without consultation with the ELT. Please communicate your concerns and questions through your supervisor and division leaders.

- **University Athletics.**

Athletics will operate within the policies of its governing bodies, the MIAA and the NCAA, and be subject to University health protocols. Currently, [NCAA Championships](#) have been canceled and the MIAA has suspended all intercollegiate sports.

THE PROCESS GOING FORWARD

As the University's policy, planning, and actions move forward, we should continue to be grounded in our fundamental goal of safeguarding the health of our faculty, staff, and students, and we should continue to be guided by the recommendations provided by our public health officials. Relatedly, and consistent with the direction provided by KBOR and KDHE, we need to also keep in mind the following additional goals and parameters for informing our judgment and making decisions:

- Strive to ensure completion and success for students;
- Maintain the University's key operations and essential functions as much as possible;
- Slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community and beyond;
- Encourage personal responsibility and informed and healthy behaviors; and,

- Protect the most vulnerable and high-risk among us, including those who may have been exposed to COVID-19, those who may be older or have chronic health problems, and those who are currently sick.
- Remain agile, and preserve flexibility for policy exceptions, case-by-case determinations, and continuous re-evaluation and assessment.

KEY TAKEAWAY

I appreciate your patience and grace as we navigate the challenges before us. We are all called to respond to a once-unimaginable situation at a time when the world is changing and responding by the minute. We will continue to work through details, meet frequently with CIPG, Student Health, and state departments to communicate additional guidance and planning around these decisions and the challenges to come.

I find comfort knowing that time and time again Fort Hays State and our people have demonstrated our innovation, resilience, and compassion to overcome obstacles and thrive. Throughout our Tiger community faculty, staff, students, alumni and stakeholders are stepping up to the challenge and finding solutions to the challenges we now face. Thank you for your energy, courage to take on responsibility for your personal health and decisions, and willingness to “lead” within your groups and committees.

As we continue to evaluate and work through the multitude of questions and issues involved, please remember that University updates may come directly from me, but may also come through announcements from our Emergency Management Team and/or posting on the [Student Health Center's coronavirus page](#)

Thank you so much for everything that you do. I am confident we have the people and passion to overcome this situation and together we will do what is necessary to protect all in our Tiger family. Thank you.

Kind Regards,

Tisa

*Dr. Tisa Mason
President
Fort Hays State University*