

MESSAGE FROM THE PROVOST



Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Today, Governor DeWine asked public institutions of higher education to step up to try and break the cycle of contagion for the COVID-19 virus. Specifically, the Governor asked us to move face-to-face instruction to remote instructional delivery, cancel all university-sponsored domestic and international travel, and to cancel gatherings where people would be in close proximity to one another. We will follow through on these actions to do our part to help slow the potential transmission of the coronavirus.

For your reference, you can link to the [press conference](#) that Governor DeWine held today. Not only does the Governor provide reasons for his directives/advisories, but also Dr. Acton, Director of the Ohio Department of Health, provides a very thorough presentation on coronavirus spread and why the state is taking this approach (at 17 minutes into the conference). I encourage you to watch this presentation.

I want to be clear. **There are no cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) at Kent State University—on any of our campuses—and none in our communities at this time.** The university decisions made today were taken in response to the Governor's directives/advisories to help stop the spread throughout the state. You will see that universities throughout the state have also responded in the same way to try to slow or break the cycle of contagion for the COVID-19 virus. **Again, there are no known cases in our communities.**

The purpose of this message is to reiterate some of what you've already read by now, but also to provide you with quick access to a lot of information and sites that might be helpful. Before I begin with that, however, I want to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for what you're about to do to help our students continue with their academic coursework. For some of you, this will be a new foray into the use of technology to support your instruction. For some of you, this will be a continuation of what you often do in your instruction. But for all of you, you will put students first, supporting them during this most unusual of circumstances and being flexible, kind, and reassuring. That's what you all do every day. Thank you.

The Schedule

As you read in previous messages, we are suspending all face-to-face instruction on all the Kent State campuses*, beginning immediately. This suspension will be

in effect through April 12. Beginning April 13, we hope all face-to-face instruction will resume on grounds.

Below is the schedule at a glance:

- **March 10 at 4:25pm-March 15:** Face-to-face classes will not meet; 100% online classes continue
- **March 16-20:** Face-to-face classes will begin using remote instruction; 100% online classes continue
- **March 23-29:** Spring break will occur as scheduled – no assignments should be due during this time
- **March 30-April 12:** Face-to-face classes will continue being delivered using remote instruction; 100% online classes continue
- **April 13:** We expect that face-to-face classes will resume on grounds

*KSU's College of Podiatric Medicine will communicate with faculty and students about their schedules, but no face-to-face instruction will be used during the same time frame as listed above.

Getting Ready

If you are currently teaching face-to-face or hybrid/blended classes that have upcoming face-to-face class meetings scheduled, **you should start now working to find a way to deliver your instruction through remote delivery to ensure academic continuity for your students.** You may choose any method that allows students to engage with your instruction and/or instructional materials and with which you are comfortable. This may include Blackboard, email, Collaborate Ultra (in Blackboard), or telephone. The next few days (March 11-15) of face-to-face class suspension are provided to allow you time to get ready and to communicate with your students regarding how they should access your instruction next week.

All resources and instructions for university-supported instructional technologies can be found at <https://www.kent.edu/keeponteaching>.

For those courses that currently do not have a Blackboard course created, or have only a syllabus in the Blackboard course, we will have created a basic template with some resources and information on how to use Blackboard by Thursday evening. We are doing this so that it is ready for you, should you want to use Blackboard moving forward. We have also added a link and instructions to the web conferencing tool, Collaborate Ultra, which will allow you to hold synchronous (everyone conferencing at the same time) sessions with your students. If you choose to use this tool, you will be able to continue lecturing to your students remotely, as if you were in the classroom with them. **If you choose to have students conferencing with you, you must use the time schedule of your current class offering.** For example, if your class meets from 11:00-11:50 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, you need to stick to this time schedule to conference with them. You may not change times, as your students may have to meet with other courses during different times. You may also wish to record your lecture/discussion using Collaborate Ultra in case a student has limited access to the technology required.

We will schedule several remote training sessions on Thursday, (March 12th) and Friday, (March 13th) to help you use tools associated with Blackboard, Collaborate Ultra, and other approaches to remote instruction. A listing will be available at <http://www.kent.edu/keeponteaching>.

If you already have content in your Blackboard course, I also encourage you to use the resources at <https://www.kent.edu/keeponteaching> to help you keep teaching, including accessing the Collaborate Ultra tool.

For faculty who are comfortable in Blackboard and the tools and resources available through Blackboard, please reach out to your colleagues and offer to help them use the tools and resources with which they may be unfamiliar.

If you have additional questions relating to teaching remotely, or if you need other tools to be successful in remote delivery, please email keeponteaching@kent.edu. And for questions related to working remotely, please see <http://www.kent.edu/keeponworking>. Our KSU staff are here to help you be successful during this time.

If students have questions about learning remotely, please refer them to <http://www.kent.edu/keeponlearning> for resources and tools that are helpful.

University Work

The work of the university will continue during this time. Not only will instruction continue, but the support you need to deliver instruction will continue. Do not hesitate to reach out to the offices that provide resources to you and to turn to your Department Chairs and School Directors for their support. We are all here to help you and your students during this most unusual of times.

The university is not shutting down. We will practice social distancing (staying 3 to 6 feet from others) during this time—eliminating face-to-face meetings and using video- and tele-conferencing instead, increasing opportunities for individuals to work remotely, cancelling all travel. Offices will remain open, but we will strive to ensure that individuals are not in close contact with one another. So, faculty can still access their offices, and researchers can still work in their labs, but please practice social distancing and limit your contact with others.

Explanation

Some of you may have first seen information about the university suspension of face-to-face classes via social media. As our communications team worked feverishly to get the message out to our faculty, staff, and students first, the “post” button was erroneously hit instead of the “save” button. We’ve all done it. And we will all do it again. But during the one minute that the message was live, it was picked up by one media outlet and then others. We are very sorry that this happened and know you will forgive the all too common human error. We’re all working hard and appreciate your support.

Thank You

These are unusual times. But we can do this, together.

Flashes do indeed take care of Flashes. I am tremendously grateful for the time, effort, and care you are putting into helping our students succeed. As we navigate these uncharted waters together, let us know what you need via keeponteaching@kent.edu.

Thank you for all that you do!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melody". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'M' being particularly large and stylized.

Melody Tankersley, PhD
Interim Senior Vice President and Provost
Kent State University