

**Subject: SRU COVID-19 Update: Spring Break Extended Two Weeks; Instruction Moved Online**

March 11, 2020

To the University community:

Like all of you, the administration of Slippery Rock University has been closely monitoring the continued spread of COVID-19 (aka the novel coronavirus) around the world.

University health and student affairs officials have been in continual contact with Butler County health and emergency officials and have been keeping abreast of the latest information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization and other state and federal agencies. In addition, the presidents from all 14 State System universities have been in constant contact with the Office of the Chancellor to discuss next steps.

As a proactive measure, I have been regularly meeting with SRU senior leadership to discuss how best to prepare our University and respond to the growing outbreak. In doing so, we remain thoughtful not only of our entire community, but particularly our students and the fulfillment of our obligations to their educational pursuits in providing a continuity of service.

With that in mind, the University has made the decision to extend our current spring break, originally scheduled from March 8-15, until March 29. This extension pertains to on-campus (residential and commuter) students only. All online students will resume classes, as scheduled, March 16.

Although the University will NOT be open for education instruction during this time period, campus offices will remain open for business unless health concerns mandate closures. Staff should report for work as usual. Those who are showing any symptoms of illness should contact their supervisor and remain at home. Contingency plans that would allow those who need to self-quarantine and work from home are being developed within each department, should the need arise.

**ACADEMICS**

During the extended break period for on-campus students, faculty and staff will be preparing for the contingency that all classes will be provided through a distance learning modality beginning March 30 and until further notice. This means that there will be NO face-to-face instruction via lectures, seminars or any other similar classroom setting until further notice. As such, residential and commuter students SHOULD NOT need to return to campus until they have been advised to do so. If the semester should need to be completed fully through distance learning, additional instruction to students on the particulars of this change will be communicated by March 25.

Please be aware that this extension of the break will come to represent a condensed semester, not an extension. Classes for 12-week courses will still conclude April 20 and 16-week courses

will follow suit May 4. Final exam week will remain May 5-9. Further details will follow.

Students who are currently engaged in clinical, internship and student teaching placements will continue unless/until the host organization changes operations such that they cannot continue. In the event that students cannot continue these experiential learning activities, we will seek to provide alternative learning opportunities that will fulfill course objectives by the end of the spring semester or as soon as possible thereafter.

### **ON-CAMPUS RESIDENTS**

On-campus residents are asked to not return to campus during this extended break unless they must retrieve essential belongings such as textbooks, prescriptions or other items. The Office of Housing and Residence Life will communicate a plan on how these visits to campus will be conducted.

Some on-campus residents, such as international students, have a continued need to live on-campus as it is their permanent place of residence during the academic year. Students who must live on-campus will be given the opportunity to apply for on-campus housing during this two-week period. Priority will be given to students who do not have a permanent place of residence within reasonable distance to campus. Dining services will be offered to these students who must live on-campus. Further communication to on-campus residents about these options will be sent out by the Office of Housing and Residence Life by March 13.

Scaled-down food operations will be available only to those students who must remain on campus.

### **COMMUTERS/OFF-CAMPUS RESIDENTS**

Students who live off-campus should use their best judgment about returning to the Slippery Rock area, while keeping in mind that campus is open for basic business operations only. All typical ancillary facilities, including Bailey Library and the Aebersold Recreation Center, will be closed.

In addition:

- During this extended break, students who work on-campus should not return to campus for employment unless explicitly arranged through their supervisor. In these cases, student employees will be given the choice of returning to work on campus.
- All on-campus events are canceled through March 30. In the likely event that face-to-face instruction does not resume, all remaining campus events will also be canceled.
- The Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference is currently reviewing schedules and procedures regarding the remainder of the athletic seasons. If it is determined that the seasons will continue, all remaining home games for SRU athletic teams will continue as scheduled, but will be played without spectators being admitted. Details will be shared with athletic coaching staffs.
- Information regarding prorated University room and board charges will be forthcoming.

- Revised hours of operation for particular food services sites for those students (international, out-of-state) who have to remain on campus will be announced.
- In the likely event the remaining weeks of the semester are converted from in-class instruction to online instruction, on-campus residents will be alerted via email as to dates and times that personal items can be removed from their residential rooms.
- All University-related travel is suspended with the exception of athletic teams on charter buses, should their seasons continue. Employees who are scheduled to travel on University business and believe that travel warrants an exemption should contact their supervisor.
- Summer and fall registration information will be forthcoming.

One of the best ways to prevent the spread of viruses is to minimize the opportunities for individuals to interact and transmit disease. As the University represents a large population contained in a small area, it is for the public good that we have arrived at this decision.

While there have been no cases of COVID-19 reported on campus, in either Slippery Rock Borough or Township, or in Butler County, we do know that the state has had presumptive cases reported with the expectation of more to come. We realize that our students are not the demographic most at risk during this time; however, as good, regional citizens, it wouldn't be prudent to possibly overwhelm local health care resources at this juncture.

We realize that this decision will cause disruption to normal routines, schedules and activities. Still, we believe the temporary inconvenience is necessary to maintain the safety of our campus and our community.

Yours,

William J. Behre, Ph.D.  
President