

To: Montgomery College Community
From: Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard, President
Subject: Update on COVID-19 Preparations at Montgomery College
Date: March 6, 2020

This memorandum is to update the MC community about the status of College operations and steps we are taking to address the latest developments related to the coronavirus known as COVID-19.

Current Status

As you probably already know, yesterday (March 5) Governor Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency for Maryland after state health officials confirmed Maryland's first three cases of COVID-19 infection, all of which are in Montgomery County. A state of emergency allows the governor to access certain resources in order to increase the state's response. The order does not limit any actions that individuals or institutions may take, such as local or international travel. Residents should remain alert and stay informed about new developments.

Montgomery College's Preparations

Montgomery College remains open for normal classes and operations. The College is not currently canceling activities or events at the College. This could change if county or state authorities advise the College to curtail operations. Please follow the College on social media and monitor the [MC website](#), Blackboard, MC Alert, and MC emails as we provide updates related to COVID-19. The [MC website](#) will continue to provide updates on College developments and offer links to information from health authorities. If you haven't already, I urge you to [sign up for MC Alerts](#) to stay informed.

College administrators and emergency managers have been meeting daily to ensure that our emergency operations plans are in place and resourced to respond, including communication strategies, contingency plans for employees, continuity of instruction plans for students and faculty, and continuity plans for operations for the College.

Special Advisory Team and Expert Partners

I have appointed several key employees to serve on the **MC Coronavirus Advisory Team**, which will monitor developments and provide expertise to help us keep our MC community healthy and safe:

- Dr. Monique Davis, Instructional Dean, Health Sciences, Health, Physical Education, and Nursing
- Adam Reid, Public Safety Assistant Director
- Carlo Sanchez, Public Safety Training Officer
- Melissa Sprague, Interim Chair, Health Sciences Programs
- Dr. Rebecca Thomas, Chair of Biology, Rockville Campus

This team, working with my office, College administrators, and many others, will advise the College about steps that employees, students, and visitors can take to minimize exposure to COVID-19 and ensure we provide an environment that is safe for learning and working.

The College is closely following the guidance of Dr. Travis Gayles, chief health officer for Montgomery County, as well as guidance from authorities at the Maryland Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Steps We Can All Take

We encourage everyone to follow the prevention protocols that you have been hearing about: wash hands, avoid close contact with persons who are symptomatic, stay at home if you are sick. Your physician or health care provider will assess your symptoms and determine if diagnostic testing for the COVID-19 virus is appropriate. If your health care provider suspects COVID-19, they will coordinate testing with the local and state health departments. You may also call the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services' Disease Control Office to speak with a nurse at 240-777-1755.

Students and Employees Who Are Ill

In the case of students, the College is requesting that faculty institute a liberal absentee policy for those who are ill or self-isolating due to illness among colleagues or family. In the case of faculty and staff, we ask that managers grant sick leave, or request advanced sick leave for MC personnel who exhibit symptoms or have been in contact with persons who are ill. There is no need for employees or students to demonstrate a positive test for COVID-19 to be granted release. The College is trying to prevent the spread of this virus through enacting these protocols and we expect cooperation from all MC employees and students.

Should working, instruction, or learning remotely become necessary, the College is looking into options for helping those without access to technology to get connected and work or study from home. We will communicate these details as they develop. In the meantime, should you have questions about your access to work or learn remotely, please contact [Jane-Ellen Miller](#), interim chief information officer.

Cleaning of Buildings

The Office of Facilities has taken several steps to increase the frequency and thoroughness of cleaning our buildings and workspaces, especially in high-traffic areas. This enhanced cleaning protocol is launching immediately, with frequent surface cleanings throughout the College. Additionally, you will see dispensers of sanitizing wipes for cleaning of workspaces and classroom surfaces. You can do your part to please disinfect your own personal workstations regularly.

Travel Programs

For students, faculty, or staff who are enrolled or registered for programs that may take them out of the county, state, or abroad, the College will communicate any changes in planning as soon as possible. For those involved in practicums, internships, or apprenticeships who may bring them in contact with persons who may have had COVID-19 exposure, please contact the program coordinator to address questions or concerns. Additionally, please monitor your MC email and check the website for news about upcoming public events.

Remain Calm and Respectful

I understand that these conditions may create anxiety for many of us, but I want to encourage us all to remain calm while abiding by health protocols. Health authorities are reporting that, for many people, COVID-19 infection produces mild symptoms and they recover. Those with underlying conditions and the elderly are at higher risk for infection and for more serious symptoms and should consider extra precautions and treatments as directed by health care providers.

Montgomery College prides itself on its diverse, radically inclusive communities, and this means looking out for one another. Let's be intentional about not stigmatizing people assumed to be from those regions that first experienced the coronavirus outbreak. Fear and anxiety may contribute to broad generalizations and assumptions about people from other countries. Classifying people from other countries as dangerous or sick, or making assumptions about a person's nationality based on their physical features reinforces [long-standing histories](#) of xenophobia and racism, whether intentional or not.

We must depend on one another to work successfully through this challenge with diligent hygiene, respectful interactions, and careful precautions that will serve us all well. Thank you for your cooperation as we work together productively to minimize the impact of this challenge on our operations and help ensure that we provide a safe and healthy learning and working environment.

Be well.