



Date: March 3, 2020

To: Campus Community:

From: Deb Kerkaert, Vice President for Finance and Administration

Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Southwest Minnesota State University is monitoring the news about the Corona Virus (COVID-19) closely. While at this time the risk of becoming sick with COVID-19 is low, SMSU in collaboration with the Minnesota State System Office, is monitoring the developing situation and we are committed to taking the necessary steps to protect the health and safety of all our students and employees.

To date, there have been no positive cases of COVID-19 reported in the State of Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Health assesses the risk of becoming sick with COVID-19 as low and is not recommending that events or extracurricular activities be cancelled at this time (See: [Information For Schools and Child Care on Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)).

Currently a Pandemic Flu Committee is reviewing SMSU's Pandemic Plan and updating as necessary. As a part of the work of this committee, many areas of campus are preparing for possible disruption of services for delivering instruction and services to students and a continuation of operations plan is being reviewed and updated.

A COVID-19 SMSU webpage has been developed and will be updated regularly with information as it changes and is released, see <https://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/healthservices/healthalerts/coronavirus.html>.

Resources and information that you may find helpful are listed below:

- We are cooperating with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and are conveying their information and guidance related to COVID-19 to staff, faculty and students. MDH and Minnesota State are working to develop regular communication channels to proactively address school-related topics with regard to COVID.
- Information that MDH is making available for schools, colleges and universities is available at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools.html>.
- Encourage students and employees to:
 - Practice [respiratory \(coughing and sneezing\) etiquette](#) and [hand hygiene](#)
 - Stay at home when sick
- Encourage supervisors and faculty to offer flexibly to employees and students who are sick, expressing symptoms of respiratory issues, or care for family members to the maximum extent possible.

- Anyone in the U.S. who has not traveled to China or been in contact with someone confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19 in the last 14 days is at low risk of becoming sick with the virus.
- Cautioning all on actions and language against anyone based on race, ethnicity, or religion based on the origins of COVID-19.

International Travel

Given the risks associated with COVID-19, Chancellor Malhotra has suspended all Minnesota State – related international travel effective immediately. This includes study abroad programs, and any other abroad activities involving faculty, staff and students. The System Office will continue to monitor reports, guidance, and recommendations from the CDC and U.S. State Department. We realize this suspension leads to many questions. We are working on solutions to those questions and hope to have updates very soon for all affected individuals.

Students and employees who are planning to travel internationally over spring break or for other personal travel are encouraged to monitor the official travel advisories. The situations for various countries are evolving and new restrictions may be issued daily. Travel information: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations.html>

International students with questions should contact the International Student Services office at 507-537-6018, located in the Student Center room 237.

Thank you.