

MARCH 24, 2020

SUBJECT: Students without internet connection

Thank you for contacting us!

Please have students whom run into this issue take a look at the following website:

<https://keeplearning.tamu.edu/>

The following web address should help students find potential solutions for accessing internet:

<https://provost.tamu.edu/keep-learning#internet>

If you have any questions, please let us know!

All the best,

Martin

Martin M. Quinn | End User Support Specialist

Office for Academic Innovation | Texas A&M University

aihelp@tamu.edu | (979) 458-3417 |

<https://ai.tamu.edu/Help-Support/Documentation-Help>

Visit KeepTeaching.TAMU.edu (<https://provost.tamu.edu/keep-teaching>) for updates and resources for teaching online

COVID-19 Updates & Resources



Greetings all,

I know that the past few weeks has been disruptive and caused a significant impact to how we operate. I appreciate how all of you have handled this unprecedented event.

With the frequent updates that you receive from multiple sources I thought I would briefly highlight a few items that have raised questions since we received word that Brazos County has enacted a 'Shelter-in-place' order. Essentially, nothing has changed significantly from how we were operating prior to the order. Our department was already operating under guidance from the Texas A&M University System directives, but please read through some of the recent materials that we have received from multiple sources within the system. Below are a few highlights:

Staffing: Only essential personnel should come to work. Therefore, our animal unit staff and office staff are operating on skeleton crews. Currently, only Robbie Lukeman, Jennifer Houston, Amy Carwile, and I are coming to the office on regular, but flexible schedules. All other staff will be working remotely.

- As a reminder, please be sure to use the shared email – ansaccounting@tamu.edu – for any business correspondence.
- Please email Mandi (acockerham@tamu.edu) for any IT support. She will be working remotely until further notice.
- Requests for our communications staff should continue to be sent to anscommunications@tamu.edu, as Maggie and Kaitlyn will continue to work remotely.
- Until further notice, please limit purchases to only those supplies absolutely necessary. We anticipate that building access will be restricted in the very near future, requiring delivery drivers to call for access.

Research: As we have indicated too many, ongoing essential research may continue, but please be sure that research staff follow CDC guidance on social distancing and utilizing best practices to avoid contamination of COVID-19.

Teaching: We will continue conducting online classes, but encourage faculty and graduate students to do as much as possible from remote locations.

Travel: For those of you who have mission critical travel, please be sure to obtain the require approval through Concur and the Office of Ethics & Compliance

Thanks again for all you do!

Cliff

Academic Updates

Sent on behalf of Dr. Katie Dunlap:

FACULTY: Please be sure to add your syllabus or eCampus class page. In addition, all course content, including but not limited to pre-recorded videos or live class sessions, is for purposes of class use only and cannot be recorded or shared without written consent of the instructor and department head.

Sent on behalf of Dr. Jocelyn Widmer, Assistant Provost for Academic Innovation

Dear Faculty,

There have been numerous accounts from other universities and at least one confirmed instance at Texas A&M University of a ZOOM meeting that was attended by a participant outside of the university. As we seek a secure online learning environment, please follow the recommended steps for setting up a secure ZOOM meeting/class session in this short video tutorial:

youtu.be/zEOrvSgdarI

If you have questions about your ZOOM meeting settings, please reach out to the Office for Academic Innovation for assistance (aihelp@tamu.edu), or visit KeepTeaching.tamu.edu.

Sincerely,

*Jocelyn Widmer
Assistant Provost for Academic Innovation*

Advising Updates:

Good Afternoon Everyone,

I understand that this has been a confusing and stressful time for you all with the transition to an online format. I also understand that there has been a lot of information to go out in regards to these transitions. I have copied the most updated information below for you in case you have not seen or received the correspondence.

Please note:

- The thesis submission deadline is Friday, March 27, at 5:00 pm.
- The Q-Drop and Withdrawal Deadline has been moved to April 24 at 5:00 pm.
- If you are wanting to change your courses from grades to S/U, please speak with your faculty advisor and committee before doing so. I will also be sending out updated information regarding the S/U option and how it impact graduate students as I receive updates.
- OGAPS is currently taking all forms online. Please review the process for forms: <https://ogaps.tamu.edu/About/COVID-19-Information/Forms-Processing-Changes> **all forms will need to be sent to me once they have all the proper signatures and I will forward them to OGAPS office.**
- If you need to meet with me, you can always email me or we can set up a time to have a Zoom meeting.
- If you are wanting to register for ANSC 691 or ANSC 685 for Summer or Fall 2020, please fill out this form and I will add it to your schedule during open registration: <https://forms.gle/BKDKrozWKT27R5UeA>

Thanks,

Carissa

Updated guidance on coronavirus—March 24

All,

As we communicated yesterday, Governor Abbott has given municipalities the authority to issue “shelter-in-place of residence” orders within their jurisdictions. Numerous Texas counties have now announced their own shelter-in-place residence orders, which impact our headquarters in Bryan-College Station, as well as several of our Research and Extension Centers across the state. We understand there may be some confusion regarding what members of the AgriLife community can do in their work capacity (and when they should and should not come to our facilities to work). This email seeks to further clarify these issues, and address additional directives based on guidance from The Texas A&M University System.

Staffing

In accordance with the guidance previously issued by the System, we will continue to follow operational changes implemented over the last few weeks. Only essential personnel should come to the workplace with most—if not all—employees working remotely. Department Heads, Research and Extension Center leadership and Center/Institute/Core Facility directors should designate essential staff needed to maintain critical business operations and continuity during this time. Please remember to follow CDC guidance on social distancing, maintaining a six-foot distance from others.

Research

The Texas A&M System has stated that research can continue under the local shelter in place order as an essential business function with appropriate precautions including additional cleaning and social distancing. AgriLife Research also views research as an essential operation with the expectation that research functions will continue and labs will remain open. It is possible that students, staff and faculty who are supported by research grants and contracts may not be eligible for compensation if research labs are closed. It is advised that when leaving your home to travel to the workplace to conduct research, that you carry your TAMUS ID with you. It is also expected that lab and field experiments use the minimum number of people to maintain the research enterprise and at every step, practice social distancing.

Travel

Mission critical travel, both domestic and in-state, should continue to be reported through the Office of Ethics & Compliance with final approval by the Agency CEO or designee. Please note, this only relates to travel that is reimbursable by AgriLife or the college, not county Extension agents.

Voluntary reporting of positive cases

Employees with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in AgriLife may confidentially report their diagnosis to [Debi Fincher, Director of Ethics and Compliance](#), who will coordinate with AgriLife leadership to determine an appropriate response. In such cases, actions will likely include quarantine of the workspace associated with the infected employee and a period of self-quarantine by the employee for at least 14 days. For those who came into contact with that person, self-isolation and/or self-monitoring (at least 14 days) will occur.

Questions and information that can be requested of employees

Supervisors may ask, but not require, information about apparent signs or symptoms of illness that may be associated with COVID-19. Employees should not be asked if they have, or suspect having, a specific illness or diagnosis. However, employees may be asked about:

- Their possible direct exposure to COVID-19;
- Their having been advised to go into self-quarantine by a healthcare professional; and
- Their recent travel or plans to travel, both domestic and international.

All information about employee illness should be maintained in the confidential medical record section of the personnel file. [Jennifer Hobbs, Chief Human Resources Officer](#), can advise supervisors on an appropriate way to have this conversation if necessary.

Custodial services

You may have noticed an increase in custodial staff in your buildings. This is not a coincidence. The Texas A&M System has purposefully asked SSC to re-prioritize their work and focus on tasks that will prevent the spread of the virus. For example, instead of cleaning large classrooms that are not being used, they've been asked to focus on cleaning restrooms, disinfecting hard surfaces, etc. Departments can assist by locking classrooms that should not be in use so that custodial staff really can focus on high use areas.

Remote work resources

AgriLife IT still has laptops in stock to facilitate remote office work. You may place your order via the AgriLife Techbuy site (<https://techbuy.agrilife.org>). Orders are usually fulfilled and delivered within a few days and can be shipped to home addresses.

Online teaching/exam options

- Some of our students have shared they are having bandwidth or connectivity issues for some of your synchronous courses or when trying to access videos, resources or assignments. Please consider additional flexibility for those students and continue to encourage them to contact you if they are having issues. You may even think about future activities, exercises, assignments or tests and how to deliver quality learning outcomes that don't rely on connectivity or high bandwidth.
- Sadly, we have received reports of people outside TAMU joining synchronous Zoom courses and harassing students. We recommend requiring people to authenticate before joining Zoom meetings. You can set this option for all meetings you host in the "Settings" section of your Zoom profile.
- Many of you have asked about an exam proctoring solution, such as Examity. Unfortunately, these companies are being impacted as well and have stated they will not be providing proctoring services through the end of March and likely through the end of the semester. That being the case, the Provost's office recommends considering alternative [exam options](#) provided on [keepteaching.tamu.edu](#). If an alternative is not feasible, then at a minimum faculty should consider open book exams with longer time limits or offered over a longer period of time.
- On Saturday, students were sent an email from the [President and Provost](#) discussing new grade, Q drop, and withdrawal options and deadlines. Unfortunately, it has come to our attention that our academic advisors and many faculty did not receive this email. Please encourage students considering a switch from a letter grade to satisfactory/unsatisfactory to consult with their advisors about possible implications on future plans. This change to S/U grading can impact professional school requirements, accreditation and financial aid requirements. We have summed it up and provided the necessary links in the [FAQs section of the COALS COVID-19 resources for Faculty webpage](#). The Office of the Registrar is going to be posting a full list of FAQs and we will link to it once they are posted.

We know that these are challenging times and appreciate your patience and cooperation as we work through these issues. The most important step you can take right now is to stay informed and familiarize yourself with guidance issued by your local jurisdiction.

We will continue monitoring the development of the situation and will keep you informed through email communications and on our [Coronavirus resource webpage for employees](#). You can also contact the [AgriLife Office of Ethics and Compliance](#) with questions at 979-845-4789 or 979-845-7879.

In closing, here is a [short video about prevention tips](#) that you can share with family, friends and colleagues. Please take care of yourselves and be well.

Sincerely,



Patrick J. Stover, Ph.D.
Vice Chancellor, Texas A&M AgriLife
Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Director, Texas A&M AgriLife Research

Office of the President

Michael K. Young

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff:

These rapid succession of updates are necessary today as we respond to the Brazos County deadline shelter in place of residence order and I ask you to review carefully. Any updates will continue to be housed on the [COVID-19 TAMU site](#). Galveston and other campuses will also issue guidance specific to their locations in line with the information below.

Here are some important things you need to know about how the shelter in place of residence order affects the University:

- **Faculty and staff should telework unless deemed essential to be on campus.** All non-essential university offices will limit face-to-face interactions and move to virtual support to the general public at 5 p.m. today. All building entrances will revert to controlled access for faculty, staff, and students. We ask that you contact your supervisor to discuss any required on-campus staffing for your office. Any individual who is in a high-risk category should not be required to come to campus.
- **Essential on-campus services will continue in support of students, faculty and staff.** Even in a telework environment with few on-campus personnel, it is important that we continue to provide limited, yet essential on-campus services in support of students, faculty, and staff. For students, this includes on-campus housing, food service, and student health service as well as limited transportation to and from campus and restricted areas for computing labs and accessing wireless internet. All of these activities must be carried out using social distancing practices. Please see [keeplearning.tamu.edu site](#) and the main [COVID-19 TAMU site](#) for updates on available student services and hours of operation.
- **Guidance to Faculty and Graduate Students and Continuity of Instruction:** For faculty and graduate students who are teaching or supporting instruction, one essential priority is to continue our crucial online course instruction and activities needed to support teaching that will remain online at least through the end of the spring semester. We encourage faculty and graduate students who are teaching courses to develop methods that allow for the continuation of instruction that minimizes time on campus. Those individuals who need campus facilities to teach an online course can contact their respective department head for details on access. Please refer to [keepteaching.tamu.edu site](#) for additional teaching resources.
- **Staff Guidance:** For staff, we ask that you contact your supervisor to discuss the expectations of your work arrangements. Please refer to earlier e-mails on the [Human Resources web site](#) on instructions for continuing work assignments.
- **Ongoing Critical Services:** Critical aspects of our business operations are considered essential under the orders and these will continue. These include but are not limited to: health services, food services that are available to-go, emergency responders, public safety, mail services, residence halls, janitorial and maintenance services, technology support, financial services, essential transportation services, airport, construction where approved, utilities and scientific research.
- **Ongoing Research:** Regarding ongoing scientific research, the Office of Research provides the following guidance: To the extent possible, Texas A&M researchers are encouraged to engage in activities that can be performed remotely (e.g., writing, data analysis, etc.); essential laboratory operations are permissible, provided they can be performed while meeting the "6-foot" requirement for social distancing. Graduate researchers may come to the research labs to conduct research activities that cannot be performed remotely. Paid undergraduate student workers may continue to carry out important support functions necessary for continuing laboratory operation. Any individual who is in a high-risk category should not be required to come to campus. Please see [vpr.tamu.edu/covid-19](#) for additional information.

- **Students must comply with applicable local government orders.** In most cases, the orders allow students to leave their residence only for essential activities, such as going to the grocery store or picking up to-go meals on campus or from restaurants, visiting a healthcare professional and engaging in outdoor activity, such as walking, hiking, running, or riding a bicycle, with proper social distancing. Students may also leave to go to university-designated locations for accessing computers and internet resources as indicated on keeplearning.tamu.edu. Please consult the central [COVID-19 TAMU site](#) for facility availability and hours updates.
- **Student Health Including Counseling.** For student counseling and student health, please refer to information provided by the [Division of Student Affairs](#).
- **Main Campus University Libraries will be closed to walk-in traffic.** However, library personnel will continue digitizing resources to support online teaching. Access to all of the libraries' digital resources and online research support will continue uninterrupted.

We will continue to share information and updates by email, social media and on our central [COVID-19 TAMU site](#) for facility availability and hours updates.

These are clearly difficult circumstances for everyone. We deeply appreciate the level of commitment of our faculty, staff and students in these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Michael K. Young
President

Listed below are important links that provide Up-To-Date information:

Brazos County Health District:

<http://www.brazoshealth.org/node/87>

TAMU FAQ page: <https://www.tamu.edu/coronavirus/#FAQ>

COALS:

<https://aglifesciences.tamu.edu/covid19/>

Extension:

<https://texashelp.tamu.edu/>

Vice President for Research: <https://vpr.tamu.edu/covid-19>

Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Texas Health & Human Services:

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>