

MARCH 27, 2020

LETS COMMUNICATE:

Please send Maggie non-COVID related items, she need submissions for the newsletter. If anyone has been quoted in any stories, written any stories themselves, gotten awards, etc.

Guidance on social media communication:

If you directly receive questions from students, parents, etc. on social media related to COVID-19 and the university, feel free to answer using the information that you find at tx.ag/COVID19. This website is being updated around the clock, so double-check the answer on the site before you reply. If you receive a question that you don't know the answer to and can't find guidance on the COVID-19 website, please email socialmedia@tamu.edu and we will do our best to track down an answer for you.

COVID-19 Updates & Resources



Greetings all,

I continue to be amazed at how well our faculty, staff, and students have adapted to the 'new normal' associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. We plan to continue updating you all as we gather additional information. That information tends to change daily, so I encourage you to frequently visit the various web pages listed below.

Now that we have managed to handle the immediate needs of converting classes to online format and establishing a skeleton crew of administrative services and maintain our livestock, we are starting to prepare for future impacts of COVID-19. A few things that our administrative team are working on are:

- 1) Preparing for online classes for our Summer semester classes;
- 2) Assisting faculty and students that may be impacted by COVID-19 on study abroad plans and internships;
- 3) Assisting faculty with long-term impacts on research and Extension programs;
- 4) Preparing for the negative impacts of the COVID-19 on our economy which will have subsequent effects on our ability to recruit and hire faculty and staff, may have an impact on our departmental budget, and certainly will have an impact on many of our staff and students.

We plan to remain proactive and address needs as they arise, but please be sure to communicate with us if you have any concerns.

Take care,

Cliff

Key website that provide current information in response to COVID-19:

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/>



EXPENSES DUE TO COVID-19:

If you incur any expenses due to COVID-19, please send these to Robbie for tracking purposes. Expenses include: travel cancellations, [payroll expenses](#), purchases related to COVID-19, etc. Please contact Robbie at r_lukeman@tamu.edu for any questions or to turn in expenses.

CONTROLLED ACCESS FOR KLEBERG:

Per President Young's direction, access to Kleberg will be controlled for faculty, staff and students, effective immediately. This means that card swipe access will be required for the main doors, elevators and stairwells. If you are required to be in the building, please keep your ID card with you at all times.

Thank you to students, faculty and staff for what has been a relatively smooth week back in, moving to our online format in the wake of COVID-19 coronavirus. There may be some bumps in the road as we continue through the spring semester but I am confident that we will continue to work to overcome any challenges and will certainly continue to provide students a world-class education.

We are at the point where we need to make decisions regarding Summer 2020 courses while maintaining some flexibility should circumstances improve, as we hope they will.

The following information applies to Summer 2020 courses:

1. Online Delivery for courses that begin prior to June 30: All summer courses that begin prior to June 30 will be delivered online. This includes the May intersession ("minimester") courses, summer first term courses, and the 10-week summer courses.
2. Waiving Distance Education Differential Tuition: In an effort to help students, distance education differential tuition will not be charged for online courses this summer (summer 1, summer 2, 10 week, or other variations) at an individual course level. For distance education degree programs with a program fee, there is no change in how they will be charged.
3. On-Campus Plan for Summer 2: Colleges should plan for an on-campus component in summer 2 with course start dates on or after June 30 with a back-up plan for online delivery, depending on the length of the current situation.
4. Registration Dates: Registration begins on March 30 for students in the School of Law and for all other students beginning Thursday, April 2. Registration will continue as scheduled.
5. Commencement ceremonies: Commencement ceremonies postponed from May will be rescheduled and announced at a later date. Summer Commencement remains August 7-8 (assuming circumstances allow).
6. Updates: Will be posted at provost.tamu.edu.

Please be aware that this information relates only to courses and that other information regarding on-campus activities and events scheduled this summer will be communicated separately by the appropriate college, division or department.

Sincerely,

Carol A. Fierke

Provost and Executive Vice President

March 26, 2020

To: Texas A&M AgriLife

Subject: Texas A&M AgriLife's Employee Assistance Program - Guidance Resources - Information and Access Details

We've seen lots of information over the past several weeks advising us how to protect and care for ourselves by distancing socially from one another; washing our hands for 20 seconds throughout the day; as well as information and resources to educate us on COVID-19. This email is a little like that - sharing resources to help you take care of yourself, as we all undergo changes and challenges in our lives.

GuidanceResources, TAMUS' Employee Assistance Program offers online training and has resources to help employees deal with all kinds of issues from parenting to COVID-19 to working remotely. This email is a reminder that there are numerous resources on this site to provide you with information, educate you on a variety of topics, list discounts available to you and, provide an opportunity to email or speak with a GuidanceResources counsellor.

Resources available online or in person (via telephone).

Website: <http://www.guidanceresources.com>

1. Choose the *Register* tab* and enter the TAMUS Organization Web ID: *TAMUS*
2. On the *Company or Organization Identification* page, select your Agency
3. Complete your *Registration Profile*, including selection of your user name and password
4. *For future access, just choose *Login vs Register* on the homepage and access resources directly

If you prefer to speak to someone directly, choose the phone number based on your employment status:

- Active Employees 1-866-301-9623
- Retirees 1-833-306-0105

Resources include information on

- Wellness
 - o Understanding Your Employee Assistance Program
- Work & Education
 - o Manager Guidance
 - o Personal Development
- Lifestyle
 - o Computers & Electronics

Click the *More* icon for additional resources on *Discounts* and *On Demand Training Videos*

Texas A&M AgriLife Administrative Services | <https://agrififeas.tamu.edu/hr/>

Updated guidance on coronavirus—March 26

All,

In an effort to consolidate information and guidance from the state of Texas and The Texas A&M University System, we will continue sharing these email communications on an as-needed basis. The latest directives from Texas A&M AgriLife are as follows:

Flexible hiring freeze

Given the short- and long-term uncertainties and impact of COVID-19 on the state economy, we must make every effort to conserve resources that can be called on should the need arise. At the direction of The Texas A&M University System, Texas A&M AgriLife will immediately implement a flexible hiring freeze for positions paid all or a portion from appropriated funds.

- Current requisitions for positions paid from appropriated sources will need to be reviewed by executive leadership to allow time for conversations with hiring supervisors about their needs.
- Requisitions for positions paid from appropriated sources and deemed essential by executive leadership will continue to be posted so that recruiting can continue. All others will be cancelled, and recruiting will be deferred.
- For positions paid on appropriated sources, requests to fill currently posted requisitions and to post new requisitions will require approval.
- Written offers of employment made on or before March 24 require no further approvals.

You may [view additional guidelines on the flexible hiring freeze on our website](#) for guidance going forward.

Attorney General guidance to state agencies

Please take time to [read this letter from Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton](#), which explains that state government offices and agencies should remain fully operational during the COVID-19 disaster declaration. Per the letter, state agencies and government offices are essential to the public, and local governments under shelter-in-place orders may not restrict the ability of these organizations from providing essential governmental services, including travel to and from their places of employment. Please note that this does [not change previous guidance provided on staffing](#). Only essential personnel should come to the workplace with most, if not all, employees working via alternate work location or remote work.

Social distancing/cleaning protocols for 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. In addition to social distancing protocols, each laboratory should be carrying out the following cleaning protocols:

- All touchpoint areas should be disinfected every morning that people are in the lab. These areas include, but are not limited to the following: tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, knobs, desks, and push plates. If there are multiple people in the area, cleaning more than once a day is recommended.
- Each person should clean and disinfect their personal items including phone, keyboard, mouse, monitor, computer, and desk.
- Cleaning should be carried out using EPA rated virucides. These cleansers can be obtained by contacting Ted.Dawson@sscscerv.com with a cc to bill.cox@tamu.edu

Additional guidance can be found on the [VPR website](#).

Proctoring services

The University has now determined there will be no live proctoring service available this semester. Faculty must use alternative assessment methods to evaluate student learning outcomes. Some options are provided at keep teaching.tamu.edu. Our college's digital education experts have also curated a list of resources describing alternative assessments, which is available in the FAQ at <https://aglifesciences.tamu.edu/covid19/>. Faculty needing assistance or wanting to brainstorm discipline-specific options can [complete the request form](#) or email coals-eadean-office@ag.tamu.edu.

Additionally, as a reminder, when creating alternative forms of assessment or for lab courses, faculty cannot pass expenses onto students. Students cannot be required to buy supplies to complete courses.

Summer 2020 courses

While the future remains uncertain, the Provost has begun making decisions regarding Summer 2020 courses. Please review a snapshot of the Provost's message below, or [view her full message online](#).

- Online Delivery for courses that begin prior to June 30: All summer courses that begin prior to June 30 will be delivered online. This includes the May intersession ("minimester") courses, summer first term courses, and the 10-week summer courses.
- Waiving Distance Education Differential Tuition: In an effort to help students, distance education differential tuition will not be charged for online courses this summer (summer 1, summer 2, 10 week, or other variations) at an individual course level. For distance education degree programs with a program fee, there is no change in how they will be charged.
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- Commencement ceremonies: Commencement ceremonies postponed from May will be rescheduled and announced at a later date. Summer Commencement remains August 7-8 (assuming circumstances allow).

Thank you for your continued cooperation as we work through these issues.

Stay well,

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

On March 19, 2020, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued M-20-17 (memorandum), “Administrative Relief for Recipients and Applicants of Federal Financial Assistance Directly Impacted by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) due to Loss of Operations.” The memorandum broadens the scope of a March 9th memorandum (M-20-11) and allows Federal awarding agencies the ability to provide administrative relief in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

We are particularly concerned about institutions with faculty, staff, and students who depend on grant funding for their livelihood and are required to shelter in place. However, the OMB memo specifically states: Awarding agencies may allow recipients to continue to charge salaries and benefits to currently active Federal awards consistent with the recipients' policy of paying salaries (under unexpected or extraordinary circumstances) from all funding sources, Federal and non-Federal (Appendix A, No. 6).

OMB’s March 19th memorandum bolsters NIFA’s continued response to COVID-19 as it allows the agency to also provide flexibilities for recipient organizations affected by the loss of operational capacity. Appendix A of the memorandum details administrative relief actions and procedures Federal awarding agencies are authorized to take.

We are exploring other ways that we can support our colleagues in the important work that they do to advance science and agriculture during this unprecedented time and will continue to do so. For example, last week, NIFA granted proposal deadline extensions for some programs to provide more time to partners as they work through organizational social distancing efforts. NIFA is also exploring a process for supplementing competitive awards where increased otherwise allowable costs are required to fulfil research objects during this time.

To that end, please know that NIFA is committed to adhering to OMB’s memorandum while simultaneously working with recipient organizations to provide the right solutions as deemed appropriate and to the extent permitted by law.

Questions regarding the applicability of the memorandum’s administrative relief provisions should be directed to NIFA’s Awards Management Division at awards@usda.gov. For more information, see (OMB’s M-20-17)

Subject: Cleaning procedures for research laboratories

In addition to social distancing protocols, each laboratory should be carrying out the following cleaning protocols:

All touchpoint areas should be disinfected every morning that people are in the lab. These areas include, but are not limited to the following, tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, knobs, desks, and push plates. If there are multiple people in the area, cleaning more than once a day is recommended.

Each person should clean and disinfect their personal items including phone, keyboard, mouse, monitor, computer, and desk.

Cleaning should be carried out using EPA rated virucides. These cleansers can be obtained by contacting Ted.Dawson@sscscserv.com with a cc to bill.cox@tamu.edu Please note: SSC will only fulfill cleaning supply requests for the College Station campus. If your campus is not based in College Station, you may reach out to the custodial services that care for your facilities or, if you do not have custodial services, please refer to the EPA approved cleaners list to obtain these products.

College Station researchers should provide building, room number and specific location of their lab in order to facilitate delivery. Due to a shortage of spray bottles, SSC will provide one (1) bottle per request. They are currently working on a more substantial order, however due to shortages they are currently tracking all bottles and supplies.

Cleaning supplies are intended for labs and offices that do not receive cleaning due to the research performed there. If your offices are scheduled for regular cleanings, they will continue to be cleaned.

We are currently collecting and curating best practices from our core facilities that may be useful to specific research fields or activities. We will post these at <https://vpr.tamu.edu/covid-19>.

MICHAEL K. YOUNG
PRESIDENT

Howdy Ags,

As loyal members of the Texas A&M community, I wanted you to have the latest information about our response to the coronavirus situation, which you can find in great detail at the [Central TAMU COVID-19 site](#).

Our highest priority is the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff - just as your highest priority is the wellbeing of your families and friends. At the same time, we are always dedicated to providing the very best educational opportunities under even the most challenging circumstances. To this end, our faculty and staff have made impressive efforts to quickly bring every one of our classes and all of our support services online, helping us protect every member of our academic community while providing the highest quality education we possibly can. If you're interested in learning more, we've created a superb TAMU Keep [Learning website to ensure](#) our students' continued success.

In light of our capacity to support their education wherever they are located, many of our students have chosen to return home. We have a number of students for whom campus is their primary residence, and others who have chosen to remain on campus because that is the best alternative for their families and their education. To accommodate and support the continued success of those students, we are keeping our campuses and dorms open while taking extensive measures to ensure everyone's safety, providing monitors for some buildings to promote social distancing and enhanced procedures to promote public health at all of our facilities. [Our Student Health Services](#) remain open and actively engaged.

Those on campus will still have essential services such as grab-and-go dining, ATM access and bus transportation with social distancing. If you have questions about which areas of campus are open or operational, we again refer you to the TAMU Keep [Learning site, which](#) can provide you with the most up-to-date information.

Like many of you, we're deeply disappointed that this historic global pandemic has caused us to adjust certain cherished traditions that mean so much to so many Aggies. But I want to assure you that Muster in College Station and graduation ceremonies in May will still happen, just in a different way. We encourage students and families to celebrate with us virtually, keeping the Aggie spirit strong and connected, even as we are separated by distance. For those who do not have an opportunity to participate in graduation ceremonies in May, we are searching for ways to expand our in-person events in August.

Our university enjoys one of the strongest networks in the world, and I know the economic pressures many of you face are real. To that end, I want to thank the dedicated leaders and teams at The Association of Former Students, The 12th Man Foundation, and The Texas A&M Foundation for always answering the call when we need them.

Finally, because people like you always have a heart to serve and a desire to take care of other Aggies, many of you have contacted me asking how you can help during this difficult time. At the moment, our biggest need is support for our students whose lives have been dramatically disrupted by this unprecedented pandemic. Many face a number of unexpected expenses. Our goal is to help ensure that they can finish their classes, graduate on time, and move to serve our state, our nation and the world.

We have now created a relief fund for our students administered by the university. If you've been looking for an opportunity to show your support, we would be delighted if you would donate to our student relief fund, which you [can find here](#).

During this unprecedented moment, thank you for your steadfast dedication and devotion to Texas A&M. All of us are deeply grateful for your passion for our university and for your compassion for our students.

Michael K. Young
President

Greetings all,

As the cases of COVID-19 increase and we become at greater risk for exposure, please know that there are important rules associated with sharing health information associated with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Therefore, supervisors cannot ask or require that employees if they have been tested or diagnosed for COVID-19. However, system members may ask, but not require information about apparent signs or symptoms of illness that may be associated with COVID-19. The following may be asked:

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

System members may notify employees that they may have had contact with an employee who has exhibited symptoms of COVID-19; however, may not share the identity of any specific employee.

To protect our employees if we are made aware of any employees who have indicated that they have been tested positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone that has been tested, we will share this information (without identity) with the Texas A&M University System to ensure that we take the necessary precautions.

Thanks
Cliff

REMINDER:

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 – ansccounting@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 ansccommunications@tamu.edu, as Maggie and Kaitlyn will continue to work remotely.
- Until further notice, please limit purchases to only those supplies absolutely necessary.

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