March 12, 2020

North Park University Spring Break Extended – Transition to Virtual Instruction on 3/19/2020

Dear Students, Faculty, Staff, Parents, Guardians and Families:

Over recent days and weeks, we have all been closely monitoring the progression of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Our Senior Leadership and Emergency Management Teams have been studying information and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with health officials for the State of Illinois and City of Chicago and meeting daily to address the challenges that COVID-19 presents to our campus. Those meetings have resulted in the development of the initial action plan listed below.

I express deep appreciation to the teams working tirelessly to help us respond creatively and comprehensively to this challenge. They are doing so with characteristic North Park care and caution for our university and our surrounding community.

Two fundamental priority commitments have guided our work in planning and will continue to guide our decisions:

1. Protection of the health, safety and wellness of our students, faculty and staff.
2. Successful completion of the academic semester, delivering quality instruction in a safe format, honoring the diligent work invested in this semester to date.

Though we have had NO confirmed cases of COVID-19 at North Park University, CDC recommendations to help reduce the possibility of transmission, thereby limiting the chance of "community spread" on any campus, include reducing the size of large gatherings in close spaces. This is vitally important to campus and community health – and simply not feasible at a university with face-to-face classroom learning, full dining halls, and interactive residence life.

With our priorities and respect for CDC recommendations as our guide, we have decided to extend the North Park Spring Break through Wednesday, March 18 for students (no classes), and move all classes to virtual instruction beginning Thursday, March 19 through at least Thursday, April 9, 2020.

Specific information and helpful dates are listed below:

For students, faculty and staff

- March 16 -- 18, 2020

No classes. These three days will allow faculty and staff to prepare for the successful transition to a fully online delivery of instruction. More information will be provided to faculty through the Office of the Provost. Our thanks to the professionals in the Center for Online Education and their commitment to the training and support that is necessary for faculty and students to succeed in this method of delivery.
• Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Students will be receiving information about how online classes will be administered by 3 pm on Wednesday, March 18. Information on academic advising and registration for Fall 2020, will follow.

• March 19 -- April 9, 2020

Virtual instruction is currently scheduled to begin on Thursday, March 19 and continue through Thursday, April 9, 2020. A decision will be made no later than noon on April 9 regarding a return to in-person instruction, scheduled for April 13.

• Friday, April 10, 2020

We will observe Good Friday on April 10 as scheduled, when no classes will be held in any format.

• Monday, April 13, 2020

April 13 will be retrieved as a day of teaching and learning, when we plan to resume all normal academic operations on campus, including face-to-face classroom instruction on the regular schedule.

We all know this is an evolving situation and we will evaluate circumstances on an ongoing basis. Please be alert to updates and information when posted.

Residential students

Our expectation is that most undergraduate residential students will return to their permanent addresses while virtual instruction is in place.

Residents may return to their rooms or apartments to collect academic materials and personal belongings as needed.

We understand that for some students, including international students and others, there will be a compelling reason to remain on campus. Campus will remain open and key services will be in place to support nutrition, health and wellness. The request form to remain in residence may be completed here Resident Student Registry Form, and submitted by 10 pm, Sunday evening March 15.

Campus services available to students

Residence Life staff, dining services, academic support services, University Ministries, Counseling and Health Services, the Helwig Recreation Center and Brandel Library—will remain open on an abbreviated schedule, but available during this time.

If a student is sick, experiencing symptoms of an illness or has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, they should isolate themselves and contact healthservices@northpark.edu or 773-244-4897, immediately.

Significant increases are being made to our cleaning and disinfecting practices and schedules on campus in order to maintain as healthy an environment as possible.

Employees

North Park University employees are essential to maintaining campus operations and services and should report to work as usual, unless they are experiencing symptoms of illness, or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. If employees have a health condition that places them at greater risk of complications from COVID-19 as defined by CDC guidelines, they should not hesitate to contact Human Resources to discuss their situation.

University resources to keep you up to date

North Park is maintaining a website for campus updates and announcements. A portion of that website is being developed for Frequently Asked Questions that may help you in planning. The site at www.northpark.edu/covid-19 includes information and resources about the virus from federal, state and local public health organizations. We have also included an email address for submitting your own questions, along
with instructions for signing up for North Park’s Campus Alert messaging system, which we encourage every community member to do immediately: www.northpark.edu/selfservice.

University sponsored events

CDC recommendations to reduce the possibility of transmission include reducing the size of large gatherings in close spaces. We are collecting information on all planned gatherings on campus so that we can consider alternatives such as teleconferencing, webinars, live streaming or cancellations. Many North Park hosted events of this nature may be postponed or cancelled.

University-related travel

We are suspending all University-related air travel, both international and domestic, until further notice unless deemed critical. Vice Presidential review and approval is required for any University-sponsored travel request.

Thriving in transition

Please know that we understand that this plan of action will cause some disruption and inconvenience. Though this may not be a perfect plan, these precautionary measures will help to protect the health and safety of our community, while allowing our students the best chance for a successful completion of the semester.

We know this plan of action raises many questions that have yet to be answered – and that many more questions will emerge. We will do our best to engage questions and provide guidance and information in a timely manner.

Faculty and students will receive guidance on managing this transition from the leadership of each school or department as decisions are made.

We will address clinicals and student teaching. The Deans of academic areas are the best resource for this information, and cases may be decided on an individual basis due to safety of clinical and educational sites.

We are awaiting news in the next 24 hours from the NCAA and working closely with our athletic conference, the CCIW, to learn its decisions about intercollegiate athletics, and to make our own.

Gratitude and faithfulness

We are grateful to all the members of our community who are devoting constant energy and effort to addressing this challenging moment in world history and responding to our own campus challenges with such creative problem solving. We as North Park University will draw strength and guidance from our God to serve our students and our mission. We are a strong community and we must draw on our resilience to meet the challenges before us. With God's help, we will.

Please stay alert for regular updates and information. Thank you!

President Mary K. Surridge