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STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM COVID-19: March 6 2020 Update

Board Members:

In light of the increasing severity and global impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), I want to provide you with a weekly update of information and apprise you of activities at our 12 state universities as all campuses respond to the existing impacts to their students, faculty, and staff, and plan for the potential long-term effects of the virus.

All state universities, as well as Board of Governors staff, continue to regularly monitor statements of guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) that are based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of the COVID-19 virus. Equally important are the decisions that have been made and the proactive planning that continues to occur on the 12 campuses.

United States

As of this writing, there are over 150 reported cases in the United States with a current death toll of 11 (10 deaths in Washington; one death in California). The CDC has stated that more cases are expected and recommends aggressive containment measures to find and isolate cases in order to prevent spread.

According to the FDOH, Florida has currently monitoring the following positive cases of COVID-19: two Florida residents, one Florida resident presumptive positive, five repatriated Floridians, and one non-Florida resident. Two reported cases are in Hillsborough County, one case in Manatee County, and one Floridian is in isolation in Washington State. As you likely know, Governor DeSantis has declared a public health emergency for the State. The availability of virus testing has increased due to Florida's integrated and well-coordinated health department system. Florida DOH testing facilities are operating in Miami, Tampa, and Jacksonville.

State University System

All state universities continually plan for major emergencies in their campus communities, from hurricanes to acts of violence to public health emergencies. Each university's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) serves to ensure continuity of essential university functions under all circumstances.

While early in this event, each university has now established a unique webpage on their university home page to provide information, updates, and direction to their campus community regarding the COVID-19 virus. Universities are ceasing operation of “study abroad” academic programs in countries with significant virus outbreaks and students and faculty are returning home.

University leaders continue to prioritize academic continuity and most campuses have begun plans to deliver instruction via distance learning to students who may be quarantined or if the virus continues to expand. Under the direction of the provost’s office, universities are activating “critical incident teams” of academic and student affairs administrators, faculty, and distance learning leaders who are putting pedagogic and technological plans in place to enable teaching and learning to continue. Student services staff recognize their critical role in educating students on the recommended CDC guidelines to promote good hygiene and take precautions to maintain good health.

As this national emergency continues to evolve, I intend to maintain communication with you and keep you apprised of national and state guidance from the CDC and the Florida DOH on the COVID-19 virus and will provide updates on conditions at our state universities.

Thank You.



Syd Kitson, Chair

REMEMBER: *Wash hands often with soap & water for 20 seconds. If soap is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 % alcohol.*