

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR



March 20, 2020

Dear Washington University Faculty and Staff,

I want to show you something. This is Brookings Hall. Today. It's my office.



As you can see, it's empty. There's a sign on the door that reads: "The Chancellor's Office will be closed March 17 through April 6. Chancellor Martin and all staff members are working remotely" and then lists our contact information. Similar signs hang outside the doors of the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration, and many others. The hallways are empty.

I want you to know that when we say we need to keep as many people away from campus as possible, we're serious. In my [message to the university community](#) on Monday, I explained that we're shifting to "alternate operations." What this means is that no later than Monday, March 23 – or

sooner, for those departments that have been able to make the switch quickly – we do not want anyone on campus, other than employees who are required to perform essential work that *requires a physical presence* on campus.

I realize this is a lot to ask for many of you. It's inconvenient, it's disruptive, it's unsettling. But this is what we *must do* to protect the health and well-being of our university community and the St. Louis region. According to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, the most important thing we all can do to “flatten the curve” and slow the spread of COVID-19 is to take [basic health precautions](#), and practice social distancing. This means putting at least six feet of space between yourself and other people. For many of us, this means not coming to work.

In this unprecedented time, as we navigate the uncharted territory of the COVID-19 pandemic together, we're all going to be asked to compromise and make sacrifices. As our graduating students know all too well with the cancellation of May Commencement, we're going to have to be resilient, be resourceful, and roll with the punches as events unfold. Many of us will miss or have to postpone important life events – graduations, weddings, vacations, family celebrations, funerals. These are not small things. But these are the choices we all must make for the greater good. The more we can do to reduce the amount of contact we have in person with each other, the safer we all will be.

There are members of our community who cannot work remotely due to the nature of their jobs, particularly on our Medical Campus. We're incredibly grateful to our health care providers and those who work every day in support of their life-saving service to society. I know I'm not alone in my tremendous appreciation for the sacrifices you are making as this crisis unfolds. On behalf of myself and the rest of the Washington University community, thank you.

To everyone else whose jobs do not require you to work on campus, let me put this simply: Please stay home. If you are able to work remotely, away from other people, that is what you should be doing. If you are not able to complete your usual job duties from home, talk to your managers for guidance on what you should be doing during this time. Do not go to campus unless you absolutely must be there. Do not travel unless it's an emergency. We've put policies in place to help support our employees through this time, personally and financially. We'll keep working to make this situation as manageable as possible for you.

I know this is challenging, particularly for faculty who have important research underway in their labs, and who are committed to excellence in teaching, even – and especially – under these unusual circumstances. The move to online instruction is a huge challenge, and faculty, I know you're not used to doing anything halfway. But please hear me: Your health and the health of our community are what's most important here. Your teaching will still be excellent, even if it's via a simple video stream or Zoom conference with your students. We can keep improving our methods as we go. Please do not put yourself or our community at risk by coming to campus unnecessarily. This is a

time for going with what we have and making it work, not trying to dazzle your students with a lot of bells and whistles. Please put safety first and *do not come to campus* unless you absolutely must.

I know this is difficult. I'd much rather be in Brookings Hall working with colleagues and meeting with guests, and out on campus visiting with members of our community. We don't know what the future will bring, but we all can remain hopeful that it won't be long until these hallways – and hallways all around the university – will once again be bustling with activity, conversation, and the comforting presence of our friends and colleagues. Until then, please make responsible choices to help protect yourselves and our community.

Sincerely,

Andrew D. Martin
Chancellor



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CHANCELLOR

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