

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR



March 23, 2020

Dear Washington University Community, Alumni, and Friends,

Greetings from Harbison House, the Martin Family's new home since September, and my new "home office" now that Brookings Hall is [closed for regular business](#) with the university's shift to remote work. Other than not going to the office or school like we normally would, our day here started like most others, but with an extra layer of gratitude for our community, as well as concern for our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends as we all are finding our way through this unprecedented time with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Stephanie, Olive, and I are thinking of you all and sending our best wishes and support during this difficult time.

For many of us here at Washington University, today marks the beginning of our "new normal." Instead of heading to class on campus, students on the Danforth Campus are engaging with their faculty and classmates through a screen. Homes have been converted into offices and remote work spaces. Across Forest Park on our Medical Campus, normal operations have shifted as our team is adapting to meet evolving needs for patient care. It's quiet outside, as normal activity in the St. Louis region has been all but shut down. At the risk of sounding a bit dramatic, it feels like the world as we know it has been completely turned upside down in a very short time.

We continue to feel great concern for our colleagues, friends, and families as more cases of COVID-19 are confirmed globally, nationally, and right here in our community. It's an uncertain and scary time, and we're leaning on each other now more than ever before in many of our lifetimes.

As we all are settling into this new phase of our lives, it's a good time to take stock of where we are as a university community, and how we got here. Over the past two weeks, we've responded to the evolving situation in some rather astounding ways.

- At the School of Medicine, efforts are underway to ensure that we are prepared to care for patients in the days and weeks ahead. Working in close partnership with our colleagues at BJC HealthCare, we have taken

proactive steps in anticipation of an increasing need for care – postponing elective procedures and putting measures in place to ensure that our frontline health care providers will be available to serve in their critical roles, and do so safely. We owe our clinicians a huge debt of gratitude as they continue to show up and provide their signature outstanding patient care during this time, sometimes at great personal sacrifice. On behalf of the entire university community, thank you for your tremendous contributions.

- Starting today, all university courses have switched to online instruction. Our faculty and students have had to quickly adjust to this new way of teaching and learning, and while we're still figuring it out as we go in many ways, we're up and running academically.
- Research has slowed to a near halt on both campuses, with the vast majority of labs staffed only by skeleton crews working on the most critical, time-sensitive scientific studies, including the investigation of and potential response to COVID-19.
- The majority of our workforce of 15,500 has shifted to “alternate operations,” meaning only those whose physical presence is required to perform essential duties are reporting to work on campus. Everyone else is working remotely.
- Most of our 4,500 residential students on the Danforth Campus have returned to their permanent residences to complete the spring semester. A dedicated team of Residential Life staff, with help from volunteers from across the university, has been working around the clock to sort and ship essential items from the residence halls, since students were unable to return to campus to pack and move out. (They have halted operations in recent days in order to protect staff.) A small number of students remain in the residence halls, and we continue to provide basic services to them.
- We're all learning to embrace the concept of “social distancing,” placing at least six feet of space between ourselves and other people. According to the Centers for Disease Control, this, along with other [basic health precautions](#), is the most effective way to slow the spread of COVID-19 and “flatten the curve.”

In addition to causing stress and uncertainty for many, this historic event also has placed a financial burden on some members of our community who are facing unexpected changes in their households. While we have taken steps to help provide financial security for students and university employees, a number of our students and staff are still struggling due to

loss of family income from other sources, interruptions in child or elder care, or unforeseen expenses for travel or other needs.

We continue to use university resources to assist those who are in need. At the same time, many of you – our alumni, parents, and friends – also have reached out to ask how you can help. In response to your requests, and with gratitude for your generous spirit, we have created the [WashU Crisis Response Fund](#), which is dedicated to providing support to our most vulnerable students and employees. Your gift will directly benefit those who need additional financial assistance during this extraordinary time.

As we take stock of where we are, there's no point trying to sugar-coat it – this is a tough and uncertain time. We've all had to turn on a dime to accommodate this rapidly changing situation. At the same time, it's truly heartening to see how our community has mobilized to respond, and the myriad ways we're coming together to navigate this new reality. I continue to marvel at the compassion, creative thinking, and fortitude our community continues to show, and I thank you, as always, for the many ways you support our mission to improve lives in service of the greater good. Now, perhaps more than ever, we are reminded how critical our mission is and the role each member of our community plays in helping us to advance it – the many ways we are #WashUtogether.

We'll continue to provide updates as new information becomes available. In the meantime, wherever you are, stay safe and take care of yourselves and each other.

Sincerely,

Andrew D. Martin
Chancellor

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CHANCELLOR

andrewdmartin.wustl.edu
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