



March 16th, 2020

To the Pitt Community:

We write to you today following the University's decisions to address the COVID-19 global pandemic. As the Pitt community – along with other colleges and universities around the country – enters into uncharted territory, it is vital that we ensure that the safety and security of students, staff, and faculty are a top priority, while also continuing the mission of the University. It is our belief that the University's actions do just that. For more information on the steps the University is taking, please visit emergency.pitt.edu/covid-19. If you have any questions or comments that are not readily answered through Pitt's emergency page, please let the Student Government Board know through sgb.pitt.edu/fixitpitt/. As of this moment, there are multiple confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Allegheny County. The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) recently announced that they have developed a free test for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and will use it to test those displaying symptoms. If you begin showing symptoms, please see a medical professional immediately.

As we all begin to transition to new forms of learning and restrictions on numerous extracurricular and cocurricular activities, there are a few important things to keep in mind:

First, it is imperative that we understand and use the recommended practice of *social distancing*. College is a place of gathering and socializing, but it is our collective responsibility to ensure the health and well-being of our entire community through slowing the spread of the virus. To do so, refrain from large gatherings and when in public keep at least six feet from others. As always, remember to cough or sneeze into your elbow, wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, and sanitize commonly-used surfaces. Social distancing also includes not visiting restaurants or bars, doing online classes at home rather than public spaces, and limiting in-person interactions to those in your home. Although one may feel healthy and show no symptoms, there is still a possibility that one can carry and transmit the virus to others that are more vulnerable. This virus has proven to be fatal to many. This is *not* a time to be dismissive of a global pandemic and to continue participating in activities that can accelerate the spread of disease. This is *not* just an extended spring break; this is life or death for the most vulnerable amongst us. There are many ways to stay connected that do not risk spreading COVID-19, and we urge you to utilize those during this time.

Second, it is important that we remain committed to being an open and inclusive community. Using COVID-19 as an avenue to make insensitive jokes towards international and Asian American students and community members not only perpetuates harmful and incorrect rhetoric, but also displays actions that are far from Pitt's values. We implore all community members to stay better informed so as to keep from spreading hate and misinformation.

Third, even though the University is taking a comprehensive approach to this situation, there are some circumstances that make these sudden changes extremely difficult for some students. Many within our community will be facing challenges regarding access to food, housing, compensation, and other basic necessities.



It is in times like these that we show how strong of a community we are by being there for one another and providing each other resources and support. Students here at Pitt have already shown this strength by creating **Pitt Mutual Aid** (tinyurl.com/PittMutualAidGuide), an online guide that provides important information on resources that students can utilize to make these times a little bit easier. The guide includes a housing, transportation, and storage support form (tinyurl.com/PittMutualAid20) and an emotional support form (tinyurl.com/PittMutualAidEmotion). Student services such as the **University Counseling Center (412-648-7930)** and **Disability Resources and Services (412-648-7890)** will also remain operational during this time as well. The operations of the Student Government Board will be limited, but please utilize our Fix It Pitt feature or email sgbpresident@pitt.edu with any questions.

Even as students return home and numerous activities are postponed or cancelled, it is important to highlight that the Pitt community can and will get through this. It is our strength, love, and resiliency that brings us together and advances us all forward.

Thank you,

The University of Pittsburgh Student Government Board

The University of Pittsburgh Graduate and Professional Student Government

The University of Pittsburgh College of General Studies Student Government