

March 15, 2020

Colleagues,

These unprecedented times require us to think differently about the work that we do and the services that we offer. Many aspects of this issue continue to evolve and create a fluid and challenging situation. Know that the feedback we are hearing from you, students, and the campus leadership are being taken into consideration as we identify the work ahead and make the necessary adjustments.

Regardless of the changing circumstances, our priorities will always remain the same:

- **To safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of our faculty, staff, and students**
- **To enable students to complete the spring semester and progress toward their educational goals**

To that end, it is critical that during this time of great uncertainty that we enhance all communication channels and work together on the above mentioned priorities. I also ask for your patience during this time. The information set is changing at a pace that we have not experienced before. Just this afternoon, CDC issued the recommendation that for the next 8 weeks, organizers cancel or postpone in-person events that consist of 50 people or more throughout the United States.

I wanted to share with you steps we are taking to adjust to this rapidly changing environment.

Academic Continuity of Operations

The portfolio of academic offerings our 37 colleges and universities provide is diverse not only in their focus but also in the instructional methodologies used. In light of the concerns that we have heard from campuses, **we will extend the preparation time for faculty and staff by one additional week.** Instruction will resume on March 30. For the five colleges currently on spring break this week, they will also receive additional time and will resume instruction for students on April 6.

Staffing Continuity of Operations

As we continue our work towards helping our students finish the semester, we must stay focused on their health and safety and that of our faculty and staff. It is important that maximum flexibility is required of both employees and supervisors. We must look at how we can do our work differently and provide services for students while also supporting our colleagues and partners. Be cognizant of the following parameters as you work with your teams to accomplish the needed work:

- For the duration of this outbreak, all campuses are expected to be mindful of faculty and staff health and safety needs, and make accommodations for those individuals with underlying medical conditions that may make them more vulnerable to COVID-19, as well as those who may live with and/or care for such individuals, or those with children home from school. Similarly, there will likely be some faculty and staff without these

conditions who are for other reasons anxious about returning to the workplace and interacting with others, particularly those who may have recently traveled. Campuses are expected to make every effort to accommodate employees and allow them to work from home whenever feasible.

- For employees whose job responsibilities do not lend themselves to telework, options include adjusting work schedules or staggering shifts, where appropriate, to increase social distancing.
- Where possible, phone or video conferencing should be used to limit the size of meetings and to continue to engage those faculty or staff who may have alternative work options in place to remain engaged.
- We can predict increased employee absences due to an individual illness, to care for family members, or respond to the temporary closure of K-12 schools. We need to plan ahead, cross-train to cover essential tasks and work through your continuity of operations plan.

The State provides confidential counseling resources to employees who are struggling with life matters that impact their personal well-being. Employees who are experiencing significant stress related to this matter may choose to utilize these resources. More information is available here: <https://mn.gov/mmb/segip/health-and-wellbeing/eap/eap-work-life.jsp>

Additional resources and guidance for state employees for travel and the necessary precautions after returning from travel out of the state or the country can be found on the **Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) BeReadyMN** website here: <https://mn.gov/mmb/be-ready-mn/infectious-diseases/covid-19.jsp>

If you have questions regarding exposure as a result of travel, Minnesota Department of Health asks you to call 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414 for guidance.

I deeply appreciate what you all do to support our students and colleges and universities each and every day. It is your creativity, passion, commitment, and energy which will enable us to overcome these challenges and provide the needed resiliency to successfully navigate our campuses through these difficult times.

Best,
Devinder

Devinder Malhotra
Chancellor