

**Subject:** Updates on COVID-19

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**From:** Provost Persis Drell

**To:** Crystal Marie Botham



APRIL 2, 2020

To our Stanford community,

As we approach a new spring quarter in a dramatically changed world, I am writing to update you on several issues, including spring instruction, our plans for summer programs, and new steps we need to take to address the serious financial challenges to the university posed by COVID-19.

**First, I want to acknowledge the magnitude of change that we all are living with right now.** The scale of disruption created by the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in most of our lifetimes. All of us are trying to work in new ways while dealing with interruptions to our plans and projects. Many of our undergraduate students have had to move on short notice. People across our community are caring for children at home or worrying about the health of loved ones. I deeply appreciate the grace, self-sacrifice and thoughtfulness for the well-being of others that I have seen across our community in this time of such profound challenge.

Stanford, as a community, also confronts a fundamentally changed environment. We must continue our work of educating students, developing new knowledge for the world and providing the best health care for patients. Our world needs these things urgently. But we need to do so in altered ways, and I am writing to explain some of those alterations.

**The spring quarter**

**As you know, we are about to begin a fully online spring quarter - and though it will be online, we expect it to be an engaging and rigorous quarter for students.** I'm grateful to our faculty, who are responding with vigor and creativity to the demand for new ways of teaching, deeply committed to supporting the continued academic success of our students.

Please know that we also will continue providing support services for our students, both those on campus and those studying from afar. Vaden, Residence Deans, Graduate Life Office deans, the Office of Accessible Education, community centers and our other staff in Student Affairs continue to be available to you. This is an especially important time to support our own and each other's emotional well-being. CAPS, the Faculty Staff Help Center and our other support resources continue to be available to our community - please call on them.

In this period of significant disruption, while tuition remains unchanged for spring quarter, we are focused on providing financial assistance to students in need. More information on [tuition](#) and [financial aid](#) is available on our website for those who have questions. We do understand that family circumstances are changing, and we will work with students and families who are in financial distress due to the coronavirus pandemic to ensure you are able to continue your education at Stanford. We encourage you to reach out if you need help. Please be in touch with the Financial Aid Office or, for graduate students, the appropriate office within your school for assistance.

### **Summer programs and research**

**We do not expect to be able to offer on-campus residential programs this summer.** The university's Summer Session will be online-only. Other summer programs, for both youth and university-level students, that have an on-campus residential component generally will need to be shifted to an online-only format or otherwise be canceled. (Undergraduates who are currently approved to reside on campus for spring quarter will have the opportunity to request to remain for the summer if their circumstances require it.)

We are very sorry to have to take this additional step in response to COVID-

19. Though the summer is a few months away, many summer program deadlines are approaching quickly. It appears increasingly likely that some level of social distancing will be needed for some time, and a return to “normal” campus activities will not be able to occur overnight. We have concluded that it simply is not feasible to proceed with normal programming this summer.

I know that many of you will have questions about specific programs offered during the summer. Many programs will need to make new plans. I am asking that each program provide information to its constituents within the next week about its updated plans for the summer and the implications for participants.

I also know that many in our community, including graduate students and postdocs, are eager to return to their normal research activities. While we hope to do this at the earliest opportunity, we do not yet know when it will be feasible. We are continually evaluating lab health and safety procedures in light of public health guidance, and we have [resources available](#) regarding remote work that can be done on sponsored research activities.

## **A challenging financial period**

**While we work to sustain our academic mission, Stanford must also now confront a serious financial challenge.** Each day brings new evidence of massive economic disruptions now occurring across our nation as a result of COVID-19. While we are still evaluating the full dimensions of the challenge for Stanford, we know it will be significant.

The challenge begins in the current fiscal year, when we are seeing both increased costs associated with our pandemic response, as well as major loss of revenue from programs that are being canceled or curtailed. We also expect major financial impacts in FY21. The recent steep drop in the financial markets and likely continued market volatility almost certainly will significantly impact the university’s endowment, reducing resources available in the next academic year.

As Stanford’s leaders did during the last financial downturn of 2008-09, we

will strive to make thoughtful choices that protect our community as best we can during the downturn while positioning us for a speedy recovery. We will need your partnership in confronting this challenge, as we work together to sustain an excellent educational program for our students, and an excellent research ecosystem that addresses our world's pressing demands for new knowledge, while supporting our community.

While our full response will evolve over time, given the impacts we already know will occur we are taking the following initial steps now:

- **Senior leadership pay reduction:** The President and I are taking a voluntary base pay reduction of 20% each. We are asking members of the Cabinet, the senior leadership of the university, to take voluntary base reductions of 5-10% each.
- **Salary freeze:** We are freezing faculty and staff salaries immediately. Increases will not be provided during the next year other than those required by a collective bargaining agreement, or those required in exceptional circumstances with the approval of a Dean, the Provost or the President.
- **Faculty and staff hiring pause:** As [previously announced](#), we are asking that faculty searches and hiring for staff positions be paused.
- **Continuation of support for graduate students:** Many graduate students rely on summer educational programs as a source of income. Many programs will not go forward as planned. We are asking all departments and programs to work with graduate students in this situation to explore alternate work opportunities and sources of support.
- **Summer earnings waiver for undergraduates:** Many undergraduates who receive financial aid are expected to contribute summer earnings to their cost of attendance. The summer earnings expectation will be waived for all new incoming students and continuing undergraduates for summer 2020.

- **Pay continuation for staff:** At this time, we continue to provide pay continuation for our regular full-time and benefits-eligible part-time employees, including those whose regular work has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the food service workers and custodians directly employed by R&DE in student residences. Because we are seeking to minimize impacts to our regular workforce to the greatest extent possible, we unfortunately are not able to extend additional commitments to others including workers who are employed by a contractor.
- **Discretionary spending:** We are asking all units to re-evaluate their discretionary spending and pull back on all spending that is not critical to ongoing operations.
- **Capital projects:** All capital projects are on hold during the current “shelter in place” with the exception of projects deemed essential by the county. All other projects are being re-evaluated to determine whether and when they should proceed. No new capital projects will be approved at this time.

These words are painful for me to write, and I anticipate they are difficult for you to read. We expect to get more clarity in the weeks ahead about the details of the financial picture for the university and the further steps we need to take in response. I will continue to be in touch with you as we learn more, and as we work to make decisions to sustain our 129-year mission of teaching and research for the benefit of the wider world.

Thank you for everything you are doing to support one another during this extraordinary time for our nation and world, and for our university.

Sincerely,

Persis Drell  
Provost

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