Important Update Regarding College Operations

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Dear Members of the Wells Community,

I’m writing today to provide you with some important updates regarding Wells College’s response to the novel coronavirus and the COVID-19 illness. First, I want to assure you that the continued safety of our students, faculty, staff and those in our surrounding communities remains our first and very highest priority.

Campus leadership has been meeting daily and actively monitoring all developments as they emerge—and also communicating directly with the Community Medical Center and state and local health officials—to ensure the appropriate response to this unique challenge. The situation remains fluid, and the unprecedented nature of this emergency requires that we remain both proactive and adaptable in our response.

I am writing today to let you know that we have decided to extend Wells College’s spring break by an additional week, with instruction resuming on Monday, March 23. Students who did not remain on campus are highly encouraged not to return to campus in the interim; faculty and staff are expected to report during the week of March 16–20.

Though no person on our campus is known to have tested positive for or is suspected of having contracted COVID-19, it is imperative that we remain prepared for that eventual possibility. We realize that some of the tough decisions ahead may prove disruptive to many people’s lives—and is something we do not take lightly. It is important to understand that these measures are intended for everyone’s personal protection. We will continue posting all relevant announcements and information to the College’s COVID-19 information page at wells.edu/covid-19-updates, with the goal of providing as much up-to-date information and support as possible to help you navigate this evolving global health crisis.

In that spirit, I ask for your patience as we continue to work through many details regarding this change in our operating status. Below you will find more specific information about this change, and I encourage you to read this entire communication very carefully. There are many more questions that still require additional guidance, and we are all working to get them answered as quickly and clearly as possible.

Overcoming challenges like these is, in many ways, the defining feature and spirit of Wells. Although health experts continue to advise that the risk for most individuals remains relatively low, I encourage you to continue to stay informed, to be in touch with your peers and loved ones, and to exercise compassion for all involved. We are all in this together.

Jonathan Gibralter
President
Student Housing, Travel and Transportation

Students who have traveled away from campus for spring break are highly encouraged to remain off campus for the duration of this extended spring break. If this poses a hardship, or if you are unable to alter your travel plans, you may apply to return to campus prior to the weekend of March 21–22 via this online form.

Students who have remained on campus during the break may choose either to 1) apply to remain in their campus housing using this online form, or 2) depart campus housing for the remainder of the break.

Students who were away from campus for athletic-related travel are still scheduled to return to campus as planned by this weekend, and may decide upon one of the two above options following their return. Our athletics staff has worked to ensure that the student-athletes’ exposure risk remained low during these trips, and will continue to closely monitor the situation.

If a student leaves campus for more than 24 hours following their return to campus, they will not be permitted to return until the weekend of March 21–22 unless they reapply in advance to do so.

Students with work-study positions or other paid on-campus employment should be in regular touch with their supervisors about their availability, especially if their travel plans change.

Wells transportation vans will not be available to pick up students at the airport or train/bus stations, even for students who have previously requested transportation for this weekend. Please contact transportation@wells.edu ASAP for further guidance. If this poses a potential hardship to any student, we will work on a case-by-case basis to do whatever we can to alleviate the problem.

Students should direct questions on these matters to the dean of students’ office at lturo@wells.edu or 315.364.3311. Inquiries will be directed to the appropriate staff member for a response.

Dining Services

At this time, our dining services staff is preparing to resume dining operations in the dining hall and the Well under their normal schedules, beginning with dinner service this Sunday, March 15.

There will, however, be some limitations and service changes moving forward. Most food and beverage items will no longer be self-serve, and certain individual items (such as fruit or yogurt)
will be provided upon request. In addition, the ‘Eco to Go’ containers will be replaced by compostable containers and utensils for carryout, and certain items such as salt/pepper shakers will be temporarily unavailable.

Dining staff are already taking additional measures to thoroughly clean and sanitize all areas on a regular basis, and will continue to do so.

**Information for Faculty and Staff**

As mentioned above, the College continues to operate and **faculty and staff are expected to continue to report for duty** according to their regular schedules, with one important caveat: if you are sick, please do not report to work without checking with your health care provider.

If an employee who is scheduled to work **makes his/her own decision to stay home**, the employee must use the appropriate type of paid time off (PTO) in consultation with the supervisor. If all PTO balances are exhausted, please contact the Office of Human Resources for further guidance.

If an employee who is scheduled to work **is quarantined** by their county’s department of health, another authorized agency, or professional health care provider (with written notice), the employee will be placed on paid leave during the quarantine period. Time used for this paid leave will not be deducted from their regular PTO balances.

If you have questions or concerns related to work hours, compensation, or working remotely, please check with your supervisor directly, or with Kit Van Orman (kit@wells.edu) or Lisa Secor (lsecor@wells.edu) in Human Resources.

**Plans for Academic Continuity**

**Faculty members are currently making contingency plans** if the College decides to move to remote instruction starting March 23, and lasting through April 13. Should that transition take place, we will reassess the situation on April 3.

If a student who is currently off campus would like to **temporarily return to campus to collect any belongings**, they must use this form to apply to do so.

At this time, we expect that **students with internships will be allowed to resume those internships**. We recognize that certain learning situations, including **student teaching placements, laboratory courses** and **physical education courses** may be difficult or impossible to replicate in a remote-learning situation.

More information about resources available to faculty to support this potential transition to remote instruction will be forthcoming.
Campus Events and Athletics

There are several campus events, some featuring guests from off campus, that are scheduled to take place in the coming weeks. Decisions about the status of each event will be made and communicated on a case-by-case basis.

In addition, there are a number of athletic games scheduled for this week and the following week. The athletic staff will be communicating over the next 24 hours with the North Eastern Athletic Conference (NEAC), the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and other individual colleges to determine the best course of action for each sport. We will release more information about the status of each of those games as soon as possible.

At this time, we are still planning to hold our first admitted student open house on Saturday, March 21 as scheduled. Currently there are 30 students registered for the program. We will be communicating individually with all guests to ensure their safety and comfort while visiting campus.

Regarding events occurring later this spring, we will communicate with you about any changes as soon as possible.

What to Do If You Feel Sick

The CDC advises that, if you’re not feeling well after a trip, call your doctor and tell them where you have traveled, including where you went and what you did on your trip. Do not make an unscheduled visit to an urgent care facility or a doctor’s office without calling ahead. You may have picked up a virus or other infection during your trip, even though you did not have symptoms until you returned.

Students on campus who feel ill should call (not visit) the Community Medical Center, which continues to operate under its normal hours, and may be reached at 315.364.3273 or 315.364.3388. During times when the center is closed, the emergency number is 888.586.8342. The CMC will give you further guidance, evaluate your condition and determine whether testing and/or hospitalization is necessary.

Students who are away from Aurora and who feel ill should contact their local health care provider, who can make a determination about their condition and respond appropriately.

We are currently preparing accommodations on campus for a limited number of students in the event that the Cayuga County Health Department and/or their health care provider determines that a quarantine or self-isolation is needed.

Basic Precautions

COVID-19 has an incubation period of up to 14 days, meaning that individuals may be contagious without showing any symptoms or feeling sick. The following precautions are
recommended for preventing the disease—and are the same common-sense practices that help prevent seasonal flu and many other illnesses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick—and if you are sick yourself, stay home.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid large crowds and keep at least 3 to 6 feet from other people when outdoors or when someone nearby is visibly sick.

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