March 10, 2020

To: Dedman College faculty and staff
From: Thomas DiPiero, Dean, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences

Everyone is acutely aware of the public health risk that the coronavirus poses. With the first presumptive positive case in North Texas recently noted and cases increasing across the country, we must be prepared to respond in the event of outbreaks closer to home. That is all the more crucial since a great many students, faculty, and staff are likely to travel during spring break.

1. All members of the Dedman College community need to monitor their health and if symptoms consistent with exposure to COVID-19 occur, they should contact a health professional and self-isolate. It is important to encourage colleagues and students who report or exhibit symptoms of the disease to avoid contact with others. Faculty and staff who need to self-isolate should inform their department chairs and the Office of Risk Management. Faculty should not cancel classes without permission of the dean. If faculty elect to have a colleague cover for them during an absence, they should get approval from their department chair. When in doubt, stay home.

2. Students who are in isolation must continue to receive instruction (see item 4 below) and must be given the opportunity to make up quizzes, exams, and any other work that cannot be carried out remotely.

3. Staff who exhibit symptoms and who are able to perform services remotely should make arrangements with their supervisors.

4. Departments need to report to the dean’s office (chavens@smu.edu) names of any faculty or staff who report any symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or exposure or suspected exposure to the virus.

5. A number of universities have canceled in-person classes. Some others have canceled on-campus events such as lectures and social events. We need to be prepared to respond should such a decision be made at SMU.
   a. In the event that in-person classes may not continue for a specified period of time, all faculty need to be prepared to offer instruction remotely. That means becoming familiar with both Canvas and Zoom.
   b. OIT offers training resources for these technologies (https://www.smu.edu/oit). Faculty who are not using Canvas are strongly urged to do so, as it makes group communication far easier. IT Connect offers helpful information on technical readiness for continued instruction.
c. OIT is determining the best way to proceed for faculty whose lectures involve equations, formulae, and other difficult-to-type material. A camera trained on paper upon which faculty write with a sharpie is not ideal but a good stop-gap place to begin.

6. Course attendance policies may need to be relaxed during this time.

7. Determine what travel—if any—is essential in the near term.

8. Faculty with international travel required as part of their research obligations can seek approval by filing a petition for research-related international travel at smu.edu/research.

9. All faculty and students should be aware of best practices for avoiding contracting the disease, including avoiding handshaking and other direct contact; washing hands frequently with soap and water for a minimum of twenty seconds; not touching one’s face; engaging in the practice of social distancing (staying at least six feet away from other people), and keeping surfaces, especially metal and glass surfaces, cleaned with soap and water.

10. The COVID-19 blog will be updated periodically with additional information.

Let’s all stay healthy so we can enjoy spring break and the second half of the semester.