March 14, 2020

I am writing to provide additional guidance and information for faculty, students, and staff with regard to the COVID-19 situation on campus.

As of today, UD has five confirmed cases of COVID-19. Two are faculty members, two are graduate students, and one is a post-doctoral fellow. A sixth confirmed case is the spouse of one of these other cases. All of these individuals are doing well, and we all continue to keep them in our thoughts.

**Personal exposure**
I know that there are rumors circulating with regard to who the affected individuals are, and these rumors can lead to individual concerns about personal exposures. Because of state and federal privacy laws, we cannot release the names or any identifying details of those who tested positive for COVID-19, nor can the Delaware Division of Public Health. The Delaware Division of Public Health interviews each individual who tests positive for COVID-19 to determine those people with whom they have had close contact. If someone is considered to be at risk because they were in close contact with one of those individuals who tested positive, the Division of Public Health will contact them. Given the hundreds of possible individuals, this can take some time, but it is not a process that UD manages.

In general, anyone who occupied the same building, attended a seminar, sat in a classroom, or had other non-physical interactions with an affected individual is not considered a close contact and has a very low risk of exposure. Healthy people who have not been contacted by the Division of Public Health do not need to self-quarantine.

**Facilities**
There has been some confusion about buildings and facilities that may have been contaminated by the affected individuals. The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is an enveloped virus with a fragile outer membrane. Enveloped viruses are relatively unstable in the environment compared to non-enveloped viruses such as noroviruses and rotoviruses. Information from the World Health Organization indicates that the COVID-19 virus can persist on surfaces from 2 days to 2 weeks, depending on temperature, pH, sunlight, the type of surface, and humidity. Fortunately, common household disinfectants are effective against coronaviruses as is handwashing and good hygiene.

UD is working to thoroughly disinfect facilities that were occupied by infected individuals. Building occupants will be notified about the timeline of cleaning, and they can work
individually to access the building if doing so is critical. At this point, the buildings that fall into this category are Colburn, ISELab, and DBI.

Across UD, we are asking people to use their best judgment as to whether or not to work remotely during the week of March 16-22. During that period, the custodial staff will be working to clean the entire campus. The University will not be closed. For example, faculty who want to access CTAL to work on adapting their courses to online format are welcome to do so, and labs will be accessible. If good hygiene and handwashing are taking place, we have no reason to expect that people will contract COVID-19 from buildings; rather, exposure comes from close person-to-person contact.

**What you can do**
We are recommending that, if possible, people work remotely for the next week. The goal is to reduce person-to-person contact and minimize potential exposure. However, buildings and laboratories will be open and essential activities can be continued. The University is not closed.

Practice good hygiene and wash your hands often. Latest updates on the COVID-19 situation at UD, personal precautions, and FAQs can be accessed at [https://www.udel.edu/home/coronavirus](https://www.udel.edu/home/coronavirus).

Anyone who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) should self-quarantine and call their healthcare provider. If they are a student and are still here on campus, they should contact Student Health Services at (302) 831-2226.

I know that I have not answered all of your questions, and given the rapidly changing conditions, it is impossible to fully dispel everyone’s fears and anxieties. Circumstances here at UD, in our nation, and indeed in the world are changing hourly.

Thank you,

Robin Morgan, Provost