To the UMass Boston community,

With the significant attention being paid to COVID-19 domestically and abroad, we are continuing our efforts to keep the campus community informed about the university's response to this public health challenge.

As Health Services Executive Director Robert Pomales indicated in his message last week, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) assesses the immediate health risk from COVID-19 to the general American public as low, but cautions that we should all prepare for the possibility of broader exposure to the virus in the United States. Accordingly, the university administration is expediting planning for appropriate responses should the risk of COVID-19 present a greater threat to the safety of our campus community.

Study Abroad

Based on CDC and State Department advisories for China, the Republic of Korea, Iran and Italy, the UMass Boston Office of Global Programs is suspending all study abroad and faculty led programs to China and South Korea, through the summer of 2020. We will continue to monitor the situation in the other countries that are the subject of the federal advisories. Students affected by these changes will need to make alternative arrangements and the Office of Global Programs will help them do so.

Spring Break Travel

With Spring Break approaching, questions have been raised about the risk of traveling outside of the United States. Since its discovery, COVID-19 has spread to 60 countries, and more are being added to the list almost daily. As noted, the CDC advises against nonessential travel to China, Iran, Italy, and South Korea.

Ultimately, it is a personal decision as to whether you travel at this time. If you plan to do so, you should consider the following factors:

- If you find yourself in an affected area, it may become difficult to return to the United States
- You may be required to complete a 14-day quarantine if you are considered a person at risk—e.g., if you find out you were sitting near a newly discovered COVID-19 case on an airplane.
- If you become ill overseas, some countries affected may have limited access to medical care.
- Older adults, and anyone with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, hypertension, diabetes, and immunocompromised states, may be at risk of developing severe disease if exposed to the virus.
- Emergency evacuation travel insurance may not apply.

If you become ill overseas or upon return, it is important that you monitor your temperature, avoid contact with others, and consult with a health care provider, indicating where you have traveled. Additional travel
Teaching and Learning
Recognizing that we cannot rule out the possibility that we might, at some point, need to close the campus, the university is working to ensure that critical functions could continue remotely. The provost will be sending out a notice to faculty, students, and staff regarding preparations for this possibility later this week. At this time, we do not expect to invoke these provisions, but prudence dictates that we prepare just in case.

Prevention
There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed. On its website, the CDC recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

For more information, visit the [CDC’s prevention website](https://www.cdc.gov). If you have a fever and symptoms of a respiratory illness (such as cough or shortness of breath), please contact University Health Services (UHS) at 617.287.5660 or your health care provider. Additional information and frequently asked questions about coronavirus are posted on the [UHS website](https://uhssite.umass.edu).
members. We will continue to remain in touch with you and encourage you to keep an eye on your email so that we can communicate with you in a speedy fashion.

With all best wishes,

Interim Chancellor
Katherine Newman