



A Message from University of Kentucky  
**PROVOST DAVID W. BLACKWELL**

Dear Colleagues,

We are in the midst of what is likely the most turbulent time in the recent history of higher education. The COVID-19 disease is challenging all of us on a number of fronts. I wish to sincerely thank all of you for your selfless service toward our missions of education, research and creative activity, patient care, and service to the Commonwealth under these challenging circumstances.

I write to reinforce elements of President Capilouto's decision for the University of Kentucky to temporarily transition course delivery from face-to-face to online or other appropriate alternatives during the period of March 23 through April 3, with the goal of returning to normal delivery on April 6. I emphasize that other than the transition from traditional to online course delivery, we intend and expect usual campus operations to continue.

The campus will remain open and functioning for our faculty, staff, students, and patients. While we will work toward providing remote services to our students who choose not to return to campus during this period, we will continue to offer services face-to-face to students who remain on campus. Thus it is important that faculty and staff plan to work on campus according to our existing policies, with an understanding that those with compromising health issues may require accommodation.

Only the President can determine changes in our business hours or the opening or closing of our facilities. Deans, Associate Provosts, and other academic leaders were briefed on Wednesday about the specifics and I expect them to lead calmly, compassionately, and with common sense. A robust flow of information across the institution is key to our success. This is an unprecedented and fluid situation and we can expect the need to be flexible.

The University's Emergency Operation Center (EOC) is active and supporting the transition. There are teams in the EOC composed of faculty, staff, and administrative leaders working on [17 work streams](#) that address every facet of implementation of our move to online delivery, including planning for delivery of services to students remaining off campus. As the work of these teams evolves, questions emerge. Below I clarify some key issues:

- **Your health.** In these circumstances, everyone should make the best decisions for their health. If you feel sick or begin to exhibit symptoms of flu or COVID-19 infection, it is in

everyone's best interest for you to remain home and to be evaluated by your health care provider. Remember that frequent hand washing and covering your mouth when you cough are effective measures to prevent infection.

If you believe you require alternative work arrangements because of a compromising health issue, those requests can be handled with your direct supervisor or department chair under existing policies for such arrangements.

For example, temporary remote work may be appropriate for many units or positions. We are strongly encouraging College and division leaders to be flexible with employees, understanding that the work of the institution must still be done, but that we must protect the health, safety and well-being of everyone who works in our special community.

To that end, supervisors must submit any temporary remote work requests for approval to Deans, Associate Provosts and Vice Presidents. The requests must be considered and approved prior to communicating any decision with employees. Our expectation is that a college and unit will seek to maximize flexibility for employees who have real needs in terms of child care and other issues that make remote work options desirable on a temporary basis during this challenging period.

- **Course delivery.** Associate Provost Kathi Kern is leading the Academic Course Delivery work stream in the EOC. All courses need to be prepared for the initiation of online or alternative delivery by Monday, March 23. Among the most important reasons for announcing the transition on Wednesday was to provide faculty as much time as possible to work on transitioning their courses. While we are planning to resume traditional course delivery on April 6, we should be prepared to continue to deliver courses online after that date should circumstances change. We will keep you informed.
- **Student support services.** Yesterday we sent out a survey to all students to determine how many of them plan to be in Lexington post-Spring break and how many plan to return home. Having an estimate of the number of students residing in Lexington (on- and off-campus) will help us determine how to allocate resources between in-person and online student support services (e.g., academic advising; career advising; dining; housing; student organizations and activities).

Do not close any office or modify hours of operation for your student support services. At this point, we remain fully operational, including our service and building hours. If your office has a compelling reason to modify service hours please notify your Dean or Associate Provost, who will in turn submit the proposal to the Provost for consideration and discussion with the UK leadership team.

Of course, we must also serve students who will not be in Lexington. We have a Student Success work stream in the EOC, led by our Dean of Students Nick Kehrwald. This team is

addressing nonacademic student services (led by Grace Hahn) and academic-based student services (led by Marianne Young). If you have questions about College-based advising offices or providing advising services remotely, please contact Nick and Marianne (nkehrwald@uky.edu and [m.young@uky.edu](mailto:m.young@uky.edu)). We are planning to coordinate the way in which all academic advising offices offer their services. Nick and Marianne will be working with the Associate Deans' Council to ensure consistency of advising delivery across the campus.

- **Your ideas.** We face a collective challenge that requires innovative approaches to the continuation of our missions. We welcome your ideas on how we best approach our work in the coming weeks. We want to share best practices and consider all good ideas. Please channel any suggestions through your supervisor to your Dean or Associate Provost, who will share them with me for consideration in the appropriate EOC work stream.

Other than changing to online course delivery, we strive to continue all operations, but we will also prepare for providing support services for our students who choose to remain off-campus through April 3. Office hours, student services, advising appointments, among other usual business operations, should be offered in face-to-face and distance formats.

I expect all leaders in the Provost area to ensure that their units adhere to this guidance and I expect full cooperation from all faculty and staff. Only through focused, coordinated effort and strong communications will we come out on the other side of this challenge an even stronger University of, for, and with Kentucky. Thanks again for your support and productive work.

Sincerely,

David W. Blackwell  
Provost