

Key Information for Oregon College and University Campus Communities about the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

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Note: this FAQ document is intended to focus on topics specific to Oregon higher education institutions and is meant to supplement the guidance that the Oregon Health Authority provides to public on COVID-19. Please go to the sites below for the most updated information in multiple languages on health and prevention guidance.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus, and public health officials are learning more about it every day. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection. At this point, the best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Everyone can help slow the spread of the virus through simple steps that you can take every day. These include washing your hands frequently with soap and water, covering your coughs and sneezes and staying home when ill.

Where can I find reliable up-to-date information on the 2019 novel coronavirus and COVID-19?

Go to the Oregon Health Authority or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for public information on the novel coronavirus and COVID-19. As the situation evolves, the information here is updated regularly:

- [Oregon Health Authority](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

Communicating on College Campuses

What is recommended for sharing information with students, staff, faculty, and families?

Colleges and universities are encouraged to share reliable information to help limit spread of COVID-19 among students, faculty, and staff. Consider sharing the following resources.

[The Oregon Health Authority COVID-19 Updates website](#): The OHA has the most up-to-date information on the virus in Oregon, available in multiple languages. This includes Frequently Asked Questions, current updates on the situation in Oregon, guidelines on prevention and travel, information for health providers, local public health authorities, families, schools, tribes, and more.

Here are just some of the OHA resources: You can find these links below by visiting the [OHA COVID-19 website](#).

- [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions \(English\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Factsheet \(Available in multiple languages\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Prevention Flyer \(English\)](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Coronavirus Disease 2019 website](#), including: General [CDC communications resources](#) including videos, fact sheets, and posters. General CDC fact sheets help students, staff, faculty, and their families understand COVID-19 and the steps they can take to protect themselves:

- [What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [How to prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick](#)
- [Stop the spread of germs – help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like COVID-19](#)
- [Share facts about COVID-19 to help prevent stigma](#)

Reinforce anti-bias

Some individuals are experiencing stigma and discrimination in the United States related to COVID-19. This includes people of Chinese and Asian descent, as well as some returning travelers and emergency responders who may have been exposed to the virus. We need to counteract these trends. Discourage people from making assumptions of risk based on race, ethnicity or country of origin. It is important to remember that the virus doesn't discriminate. There are no specific cultural groups or people of a particular heritage that are more or less likely to get COVID-19 following exposure or spread it to others. The CDC has [information higher education institutions can share](#) to reduce COVID-19-associated fear and stigma. Other resources:

- [COVID-19: Learn the Facts. Viruses Don't Discriminate](#)

Maintain confidentiality

Maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection. Do not share information about cases that has not already been shared by your local public health authority. Your local public health department and institution will communicate critical information about an outbreak in a college setting, but student confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with federal privacy laws, including the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) and the [Family Education Rights and Privacy Act](#).

Keep rumors and misinformation from spreading

Sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is critical to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading. You can help by pointing people to reliable sources such as the OHA or CDC.

Cancellations and Best Practices for Classes/Campus Events

What is the guidance regarding closure or suspension of Oregon college campus operations, classes, and events?

The decisions are made by colleges or universities in accordance with guidelines by public health officials, to protect the public health of students, faculty, staff, and all who participate in the campus community. The Oregon Health Authority (OHA), working through the local public health office and in collaboration with the U.S. CDC, provides information and guidance to institutions. Oregon higher education institutions are advised to follow:

- [Oregon Health Authority's Interim public health recommendations for response to COVID-19 cases in Oregon schools, March 8, 2020.](#)
- [CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education \(IHE\) to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\).](#)
- Governor Kate Brown's [Updated Mitigation Measures for Coronavirus Response and Executive Order 20-05: Prohibiting Large Gatherings Due to Coronavirus Outbreak in Oregon](#), March 12, 2020

Pursuant to [Governor Brown's Executive Order 20-05](#), all large gatherings over 250 people are canceled statewide, effectively at the time of the directive, for four weeks (through April 8, 2020).

- Large gatherings subject to this order include but are not limited to community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based, or sporting events, concerts, conventions, fundraisers, and any similar events or activities, if a distance of at least three (3) feet between individuals cannot be maintained.

Colleges and universities are advised to continue teaching and learning operations and to shift to online/remote delivery whenever feasible in addition to other mitigation techniques recommended by the Governor. (See recommendations below.) Closure of colleges and universities is not called for in the Governor's order, and these institutions can consider available alternatives to limit spread before closing a school, college, or university in the event that a COVID-19 case is detected among students or staff. Schools, colleges and universities should make decisions in concert with public health authorities, based on real-time information about COVID-19 and its transmission and using public health best practices. Meanwhile, colleges and universities should emphasize the simple things people can do to keep healthy and should remind students, faculty, and staff who are ill not to attend school and to remain at home. OHA will continue to reassess this recommendation as the outbreak continues.

In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19, the first step for colleges and universities is to consult with local health officials. College and university administrators should work in close collaboration with local health officials, and follow state and federal guidance, to make decisions about suspending classes or canceling events and activities. Colleges and universities are not expected to make decisions about suspending classes or canceling events on their own. They can seek specific guidance from local health officials to determine whether, when, and for how long to take these steps. The recommendation on class suspension and cancellation may change in terms of geographic scope or duration as the location outbreak situation evolves.

High-Risk Populations:

Individuals in high risk populations (those over 60 years of age, or those with an underlying health condition) should avoid gatherings of more than ten (10) people, for four weeks (through April 8, 2020).

Individuals at high risk for severe illness should consult with their health care providers about specific steps to lower their risk of illness. All employees, students, volunteers and visitors who are ill should stay home.

Cancellation or Limitation of Non-Essential Events: Colleges and universities should, to the extent possible, cancel or limit all non-essential gatherings and group activities, including but not limited to:

- Group activities that do not allow for individuals to maintain a distance of three feet or more from one other;
- Student and family recruitment events;
- Prospective student visits to and from campus;
- Competitions;
- Concerts and theatrical events;
- Conferences, symposia, group trainings, and professional learning activities;
- Audience participation at athletic events. **Colleges and universities should limit interscholastic athletics and activities to student participants, essential personnel, and credentialed media.**

Colleges and universities should make this information available to outside and onsite partners.

What mitigation efforts should colleges and universities take to reduce the spread of the virus?

Pursuant to Governor Brown's [Updated Mitigation Measures for Coronavirus Response](#) on March 12, 2020, colleges and universities in Oregon are advised to follow the mitigation recommendations outlined below, including shifting to remote/online learning options where feasible.

High-Risk Populations:

People at higher risk of severe illness (those over 60 years of age, or those with an underlying health condition) should avoid gatherings of more than ten (10) people, for four weeks (through April 8, 2020).

These people should consult with their healthcare providers about specific steps to lower their risk of illness. All employees and students, volunteers and visitors who are ill should stay home and away from others.

Mitigating Risk at Non-cancelled Classes, Meetings, and Events:

Colleges and universities should follow the recommendations in the Governor's directives for limiting possible exposure to COVID-19 to the greatest extent possible at non-cancelled events, including by implementing social distancing measures in campus workplaces, dining halls, classrooms, events, and all other physical spaces on campuses. All non-cancelled events including college classes are recommended to be modified events as follows:

- Make classes or events remote/virtual when possible.
- Make performances, presentations, and other content available online.
- Change the location of event to an outdoor setting.
- Transition a large class or event to multiple events with fewer people.
- Send announcements ahead of events reminding high risk individuals and persons who are sick to stay home.
- Display signs that encourage hand washing.
- Promote appropriate respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene practices prior to, and during, the class or event through signage and announcements. Visit the CDC's [Coughing and Sneezing Etiquette](#) and [Clean Hands Webpage](#) for more information.
- Ensure individuals have ready access to hand sanitizer and sinks with water, soap, and paper towels to promote proper hand hygiene.
- Politely ask individuals to leave if they are sick and coughing.
- Post signage reminding people who are sick to stay home.
- Prioritize that all frequently touched surfaces throughout the venue are properly cleaned prior to the event with approved disinfectants and that adequate cleaning supplies are available for use during the event.
- Engage in "touchless" greetings instead of, for example, shaking hands.

Dining Halls and Restaurants:

Colleges and universities should encourage social distancing, reconfigure spaces, and emphasize take-out ordering in dining facilities and restaurants on campus.

Additional Social Distancing Recommendations for Colleges and Universities as Employers:

The following social distancing measures should be implemented to the greatest extent possible in campus workplaces, dining halls, classrooms, events, and all other physical spaces on campuses:

- Maintain a distance of at least three (3) feet between individuals in classrooms, offices and at worksites; reconfigure spaces as needed including classrooms and dining halls to allow for distance.
- Implement staggered work schedules.
- Cancel or limit in-person meetings by utilizing teleconference and videoconference technologies.
- Limit all non-essential meetings of twenty (20) or more individuals, including after-work functions.
- Limit all non-essential work travel—in-state, national, or international work travel.
- Limit all work-sponsored conferences, tradeshow, and other events.

- Campus and university leadership should also review additional guidance for employers outlined in the Governor Brown's [Updated Mitigation Measures for Coronavirus Response](#).

Childcare Facilities/Providers on Campus:

Childcare facilities on campus should follow the recommendations from Governor Brown's [Updated Mitigation Measures for Coronavirus Response](#).

- Take the following actions regarding activities, to the extent possible:
 - Cancel all in-person training activities or professional learning, and discourage participation of staff in community-based training that is not available online;
 - Cancel all in-person parenting education and parent information meetings;
 - Cancel field trips;
 - Limit staff meetings and gatherings;
 - Stagger meal and outdoor times to limit interaction.
- Children, teachers and staff who are ill should stay home until their fever and cough are gone for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- Childcare programs are strongly encouraged to implement sick leave policies that support staff who are symptomatic, particularly high-risk individuals, from coming to work.
- Childcare programs that are experiencing hardship in maintaining operations should consult with their licensing specialist for guidance.
- Childcare providers should coordinate with education and early learning partners including schools, especially when co-located.

Transportation on Campus:

Transportation services offered on college campuses should follow the guidance in Governor Brown's [Updated Mitigation Measures for Coronavirus Response](#).

Individuals and entities providing transit services are recommended to:

- Post or play (through audio) reminders to stay home when sick.
- Encourage individual to travel only when essential.
- Avoid crowding and encourage social distancing.
- Increase cleaning.

Ride shares are encouraged to clean regularly and have windows down, when possible.

Travel and Study Abroad

Should staff or students delay or suspend travel to affected areas?

For guidance for students, staff, or faculty who plan to travel, or have recently traveled, to areas with high risk of COVID-19, refer to CDC's [FAQ for travelers](#) and [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel](#) websites. Travel recommendations differ by country.

Should colleges postpone or cancel foreign student exchange programs?

On March 1, 2020, CDC issued specific guidance to higher education institutions to *consider* postponing or cancelling student foreign student exchange programs. [Read the Guidance for Student Foreign Travel for Institutions of Higher Education here.](#)

CDC recommends that institutions *consider* asking current program participants to return to their home country. Those overseeing student foreign exchange programs should be aware that students may face unpredictable circumstances, travel restrictions, challenges in returning home or accessing health care while abroad.

CDC further recommends that institutions *consider* asking students participating in study abroad programs to return to the United States. Institutions should work with state and local public health officials to determine the best approach for when and how (e.g., chartered transportation for countries or areas assessed as high-risk for exposure) their study abroad students might return. All plans for returning study abroad students should be designed to protect participants from stigma and discrimination.

Given the speed of spread and the number of countries experiencing person-to-person transmission, higher education institutions should evaluate the risks associated with choosing to maintain programs abroad and take the appropriate proactive measures. Higher education institutions that continue to maintain programs abroad should monitor [cdc.gov/COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID-19) for additional information.

What guidance is available for staff or students returning from affected areas?

A list of countries and their risk assessment level for COVID-19 can be found on the CDC webpage: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel](#). Guidance differs by country risk assessment level.

This website has relevant information for students, staff, and faculty who have recently traveled back to the United States. CDC guidance for [high-risk countries with widespread sustained \(ongoing\) transmission can be found here.](#)

Cleaning and Disinfecting

What kind of routine environmental cleaning is recommended to prevent spread of COVID-19?

CDC recommends the following routine cleaning:

- Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) with the cleaners typically used. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label.

- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down by students, staff, and faculty before each use.

How are facilities with students/staff identified with COVID-19 decontaminated?

If students and staff at a college or university develop the COVID-19 infection, cleaning with standard disinfectants is effective in killing the virus. A plan for cleaning campus facilities can be developed by the institution in consultation with local public health. Here is a list of [disinfectants that can be used to kill the COVID-19 virus](#) and [CDC's Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#).

Colleges with Dormitories

What are the current state public health recommendations related to students in dormitories?

Is it safe to go to class but wear a mask (reaction of classmates and professor?)

No, if coughing, students and staff should stay home and should not attend classes, events or congregate areas of campus. If student is living in a dorm, they should wear mask while in the dorm.

Is it safe to go to dining hall but wear a mask?

A student who is coughing or has symptoms should avoid congregate settings. If possible, have a friend bring food to their room in the dorm. If this is not possible, the student should wear a mask to the dining hall to get food to bring back to their room. In this case, it is best that the student not self-serve; however, with a mask in place and hand sanitizer at the beginning of the line, it may be considered.

Is it safe for a student with symptoms return to the residence hall?

The student and the school should consider whether there is an alternative setting(s) to the dormitory that is feasible to return the student to; for example, home; or other, less dense housing). If there is no feasible alternative, the student should return to the residence hall and wear a mask if they are coughing.

How many students can be placed in isolation daily?

Self-isolation means limiting contact with other people as much as possible. This includes isolating yourself as much as possible from anyone living in your residence. There is no limit on the number of students who can self-isolate.

When should a student be sent to their home of record?

If a student is coughing, and it is feasible and practicable to send them home without increasing risk to the individual or the public, this should be the first choice.

Are there any particular things that we should do with laundry, waste, meals?

Standard laundering will do the job of killing the coronavirus. People emptying waste baskets with used tissues should wear gloves and wash thoroughly when the task is

complete. Standard food-handler hygiene applies to food waste.

What are the reporting and communication recommendations related to students in dormitories who are ill or symptomatic?

Should a school/provider tell anyone in the residence hall that another resident is symptomatic or diagnosed with COVID-19?

Healthcare providers are required to maintain the confidentiality of patients and should not report or broadcast patient information to anyone. The student will make their own determination of whether and how much to share.

Should the school share or report symptoms or illness of individuals to others?

No, schools should not share or report symptoms or illness and should leave it up to the student to share if they wish to share. Students should not be advised or pressured to share confidential health information.

Should the school respond if a symptomatic resident discloses to their co-resident “they are checking for coronavirus, but don’t think I really have it.”

School should leave it up to the student to share if they wish to share. Students should not be advised or pressured to share confidential health information.

Should a resident’s parents be told that their child is in a room with someone who is being monitored/is symptomatic for COVID-19?

OHA cannot disclose any information about whom we are testing and for what. Many people are now being tested for COVID-19, and the vast majority do not have it. If your child is a contact of a known case, public health officials will be following up with him or her.

What is the best way to reduce stigma and support a logical and calm response among other residents and staff who may work in a resident hall where a person is being monitored?

People do best when they have fact-based information about an illness and knowledge of what they can do to protect themselves and their families. Schools can pro-actively sharing information about COVID-19, share that flu is also circulating, and make clear in communications that many people with either flu or COVID-19 have mild illness. Anyone who’s sick should self-isolate and stay away from others until symptoms resolve. If some contact with others is unavoidable, spread can be reduced if the coughing person wears a mask. Sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is critical to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading. You can help by pointing people to reliable sources only such as the OHA or CDC.

How do we best manage the reaction of campus as word spreads that there are individuals in isolation on the campus?

People do best when they have fact-based information about an illness and knowledge of what they can do to protect themselves and their families. Schools can pro-actively sharing information

about COVID-19, share that flu is also circulating, and make clear in communications that many people with either flu or COVID-19 have mild illness. School leadership should regularly communicate with the campus community and parents about steps they are taking to keep their campus safe, and support those who may be self-isolated in residences. Sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is critical to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading. You can help by pointing people to reliable sources only such as the OHA or CDC.

Other Planning Considerations for College and University Leadership

What should colleges and universities do now to prepare for COVID-19 impacts?

See the [CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education \(IHE\) to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) for more detailed information on the steps below.

To prepare for possible community transmission of COVID-19, the most important thing for colleges and universities to do now is plan and prepare, to help slow the spread of respiratory infectious diseases, including COVID-19. The CDC recommends that institutions:

- Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans, in collaboration with local health departments, institution systems, and other relevant partners. Colleges and universities in Oregon and elsewhere may have established similar planning processes as part of their plans for pandemic influenza, and this can be a resource.
- Develop information-sharing systems with partners to establish reporting on key facts such as absenteeism or changes to student health center traffic.
- Monitor and plan for absenteeism of students, staff, and faculty, including reviewing attendance and sick leave policies, and more.
- Establish procedures for students, staff, and faculty who are sick on campus, to keep sick individuals separate from well individuals.
- Ensure health clinics prepare for COVID-19. Review CDC guidance to help healthcare facilities prepare for COVID-19. Guidance includes [steps to take now](#) and strategies for [preparing for community transmission](#) of COVID-19.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning.
- Create plans to communicate accurate and timely information to the campus community.
- Review CDC's [guidance for businesses and employers](#).

What guidance is in place for colleges and universities in the event of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in their community?

See the [CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education \(IHE\) to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) for more detailed information on the steps below.

- The first step if this situation arises is to talk with local health officials.
- Determine with local health officials if, when, and for how long the college or university may need to suspend classes and postpone or cancel extracurricular or large events and activities.
- If the individual attended class or was active on campus prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case, work with the local health department and other relevant leadership to identify and counsel those with close, face-to-face contact with the ill person, while following laws with regard to confidentiality.
- Ensure continuity of teaching, learning, and research.
- Ensure continuity of safe housing. Work in close collaboration with local health officials to make needed decisions related to on-campus housing. See the full [guidelines on dormitories and housing in the CDC interim guidance here.](#)
- Residents identified with COVID-19 or identified as contacts of individuals with COVID-19 should not necessarily be sent to their permanent homes off-campus.
- Ensure continuity of meal programs. Consult with local health officials to determine strategies for modifying food service offerings to the campus community. See the full [guidelines on food services in the CDC interim guidance here.](#)
- Consider if and when to stop, scale back, or modify other support services on campus.
- Help counter stigma and promote resilience on campus.
- Speak out against negative behaviors, including negative statements on social media about groups of people.
- Develop plans to support students, staff, and faculty who may feel overwhelmed by COVID-19 and associated events on campus.

How can colleges and universities learn from each other in Oregon as this situation evolves?

State and institutional leaders in Oregon have established a system for information-sharing between those involved with planning and decisions related to the novel coronavirus at Oregon institutions. Individuals who have questions about their institution's participation on this resource should contact their college or university leadership.