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Coronavirus Update 4-24-2020

The Coronavirus Planning Team
Sacred Heart University

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Sat 4/25/2020 4:19 PM

coronavirusplanningteam@sacredheart.edu

Coronavirus Update 4-24-2020

Dear members of the Sacred Heart University community,

This week, we are sharing with you some work the University is doing to respond to these unprecedented times—both internally and out in public.

The focus right now is on getting students back on campus for on-ground classes and experiences as soon as we are able to do so safely. We realize that the reopening of campuses (like the rest of the economy) will be gradual and will mean modifications to ensure everyone's safety. To that end, we are looking at a variety of scenarios and contingencies. That said, Sacred Heart is planning to resume our on-campus, residential program in the fall of 2020, following the recommended best health practices of the CDC and guidance from the Governor. After the health and safety of our community, getting students, faculty and staff back on campus is the University's top priority.

Working behind the scenes on our responses to this pandemic and our plans to get back to campus are a group of task forces appointed by President Petillo. Each task force is appropriately populated with the University staff and faculty with the knowledge and experience to tackle the issues before them, and these leaders are bringing in others throughout campus as needed. We have already shared some of the decisions that have been made, including decommissioning some buildings, opening up others to first responders and much more. These task forces cover the full range of University operations that have been affected by this crisis.

As its name suggests, there is a fall semester task force planning for several scenarios for learning as we head to the beginning of the next academic year and look at the various contingencies under which we can return to campus. The community wellness team is working to ensure the physical, mental and spiritual health of the SHU community and putting in place whatever is needed to maintain it. This can range from informational programs and sharing sessions to providing face masks and hand sanitizer and implementing robust cleaning protocols. They are also examining the lessons learned from this experience that can help us under similar circumstances in the future. The business continuity task force is ensuring that the University continues to run efficiently, maintains its financial stability and is able to pivot quickly to respond to rapidly changing business environments. The campus operations & emergency housing team has been making decisions about decommissioning buildings, offering housing to first responders and what both areas will need to maintain safe, clean and healthy environments. There is a reimagining the University task force that is considering what the University of the future might look like given the times in which we live and how education, business and the marketplace has changed so dramatically. Finally, the communications task force has been (and will continue) keeping you informed as information becomes available and decisions are made. That group is also looking at ways to constantly improve communications, University-wide, going forward.

Throughout this crisis, University faculty, staff, students and alumni have been coming up with some creative ideas to help others during this crisis. You can read about some of them [here](#).

In addition, for the past few weeks, the SHU food truck has been providing breakfast free of charge for frontline workers at Bridgeport and St. Vincent's Hospitals, and we are making plans to expand to lunch and dinner offerings. Click the [link](#) to see coverage from News 12.

Launched with a generous gift from a trustee, the University has started a [relief fund](#) for students who are experiencing financial distress because of the pandemic. Students will be able to apply for grants from the fund.

Yesterday was the University's annual Academic Festival where students present projects that they have been working on for most of the year—including during the past six weeks of distance learning. The festival was virtual this year with students posting their research on [Digital Commons](#) and uploading video presentations of their work. Many students participated in the live stream, which included the awards ceremony. Click the link above to see their incredible work.

Let's continue to pray for the sick and their loved ones and look forward to the time when we will all be together again.

Have a good weekend!

The Coronavirus Planning Team

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