

March 17, 2020

McGovern College students:

Here's my update on where we are for March 17, 2020.

Status of arts events and courses

Please see the email below (and the attachment, which duplicates the text below). This is a rapidly changing situation, and it became clear to us that it would be necessary to cancel all performances, productions, public exhibitions, festivals, and special events scheduled for the remainder of the spring semester. As much as we tried, there was no way to avoid this. The preparation time for such events is right now; even if we were to return to a normal situation, we wouldn't be able to continue with events scheduled even for mid-April and after.

I am so sorry about the stress and disappointment that the cancellation is sure to cause. Please know that it wasn't any easier for me to write it than it is for you to read it. I understand very well how heartbreaking it must be to have put in the time and effort on your work up until now, only to have the final presentation of that work cancelled at the 11th hour. Keep in mind the public health objective of every decision; right now there is a serious health risk associated with holding events that would draw even relatively small audiences. I want nothing more than to contribute to the solution to this problem rather than to exacerbate the problem itself.

Please know that we are looking for every opportunity to reschedule productions or performances wherever it is feasible to do so, and this gives us something to look forward to in the future—even though I am very aware that this is an imperfect solution and will not affect everyone equally.

I think one of the key aspects of my statement is the fourth paragraph: this assures you that the cancellation decision is separate from the question of whether you will get the credit that you need for progress in your programs or progress toward graduation. I will restate here that we are committed to delivering the courses you need in the time that you need them, even if the format and content of those courses may not be exactly the same as what was originally planned. This is an imperfect solution in some ways, but I also hope that you will agree with me that it is far better than a delay in your careers, your progress, your graduation, or otherwise.

Again, every school and program in the college is developing a plan for continuity of instruction and granting of course credit, and you will be informed by your faculty instructors on details of these plans by Friday, March 20. There will be alternative arrangements in every situation, including final recitals, concerts, productions, exhibitions, and others. You may have already received communication about these alternative arrangements; in any case, we will continue to be in touch with you about details regarding specific courses and situations. Please

look for more detailed communication on this subject from your schools, programs, or faculty by Friday this week, if you have not received it already.

I have received questions on whether the rest of the semester will be delivered online or whether a return to face-to-face instruction is possible. It is true that the situation is being evaluated continuously, and that the University of Houston has committed to online delivery of courses only through April 4. At this time, however, I am planning to give faculty members the option to continue online or alternative delivery of course content, even should a return to face-to-face instruction prove to be possible. Our faculty members are doing a tremendous amount of work to reformat their courses and deliver the content that you need to complete these courses; I understand that changing back to a previous format may or may not be feasible or practical, depending on individual circumstances.

Note also in this regard that I have received numerous questions about the status of commencement. I have intentionally not addressed the question of commencement in my statement. Commencement will be handled separately from any decisions that I have made regarding McGovern College events. At this time, no decision has been made to cancel commencement. The President announced today that a decision on commencement would be made next week.

Technology

At this time the Arts and Technology Center is closed due to the cancellation of classes this week (week of March 16) and our treating this week as if it were spring break. We are working as we speak to determine the status of the Arts and Technology Center beginning next week (week of March 23); the public health situation is rapidly changing, and there are many variables.

If you rely on the ATC for projects and production of work, I realize that the closure of the lab this week presents an obstacle. We are working to make alternative arrangements and will be in touch to communicate those arrangements to you.

Facilities

At this time, facilities remain open and accessible. We are working to determine what public health risks might be associated with leaving the facilities open. It is possible that we may need to restrict access to the facilities, but at this time we do not have enough information to make an informed decision. I will continue to update you.

Employee status

As I mentioned yesterday, I understand the economic ramifications of the situation. I understand that those of you who are employed in the college are concerned about continued employment and sources of income. At this time I working with the college leadership to determine what alternative work assignments will be made for students whose job assignment is no longer in demand (box office employees, for example, in a situation in which all ticketed events are cancelled) or who have requested permission to work remotely. I am committed to

continuing to determine what work arrangements can be made in order to continue to pay students who we have committed to employing. Remember that if you need to work remotely, please make the request using one of these two forms: [work-study student request form](#) / [request form for all other staff and student employees](#).

Other items

Please note that I am posting all of my updates online at <https://uh.edu/kgmca/covid-19-dean-communications/>. We are posting on social media on these channels: twitter @uhkgmDean; twitter @uhkgm_arts; facebook @UHKGMarts; and Instagram @uhkgm_arts.

As I mentioned yesterday, refer to <https://uh.edu/covid-19/> for the latest and most complete information from the University of Houston. See especially the link to the very helpful FAQ page (<https://uh.edu/covid-19/faq/>). If you find that you need emotional or mental-health support during this difficult time, please contact the University of Houston Counseling and Psychological Services, at <https://www.uh.edu/caps/>.

I will continue to provide updates as the situation continues to evolve. Please continue to contact me with questions.

Best wishes,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Davis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Davis
Dean and Professor of Music
Cullen Foundation Endowed Chair