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To: cfaes-all@lists.service.ohio-state.edu
Subject: [cfaes-all] Dean's Update
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Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[Univ.COVID19ResponseTimeline.pdf](#)
[ATT00001.txt](#)

CFAES Update 4/1/2020

CFAES Community:

In the past few days, I've had the opportunity to talk with several faculty and staff and even more, I deeply appreciate the efforts each of you are making. There are many competing priorities in our lives these days – concerns for our health or the health of loved ones, managing work and ensuring the well-being of our students, some of us are balancing childcare or home-schooling, or some of us like myself are worried about our grown children or aged parents who are far away.

It is frustrating that so many things are out of our control during this pandemic. However, there are things we can control, most importantly **protecting each other, our loved ones, and our community**. The threat of this disease is real and each of us must do our part to reduce the spread as much as possible. It's also clear that each of us will feel the adverse impact of this crisis in one way or another. Whether it's that we know someone who becomes ill, or our work is significantly altered, or our financial picture changes drastically. None of us will be untouched.

As we continue on with virtual teaching, learning, and working, we all have different circumstances altering our reality. There have been several COVID-19 articles (e.g. <https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>) that overlay the stages of grief with our reality:

1. Denial. It can't be as bad as it is and hoping it doesn't get that bad.
2. Anger. You might be angry about being stuck at home and wondering who is going to help everyone. You may be angry that your hard work and planning will not come to fruition.
3. Depression. Being physically isolated. What are you doing to stay connected to people?
4. Bargaining. If I wash my hands and stay at home, maybe everything will be ok.
5. Acceptance.

The following quote from the post "Why We Waited So Long To Take The Coronavirus Seriously" sheds light on this processing. (www.huffpost.com/entry/why-we-waited-take-coronavirus-seriously)
"Humans aren't very good at predicting or assessing risk. We tend to look to our emotional reactions to judge how likely a threat is. People aren't going to social distance if they see the virus as not their problem. But when they suddenly realize, "Oh, I'm at risk for giving the disease to my grandmother who could die from that" can bring it home for them."

To that end, I think it is important to reflect on where we've been and where we're headed.

While it may feel like information has come at you fast and sometimes jumbled, these orders and restrictions impacting our daily life have been layered on gradually over the past couple of months

and will likely be peeled back in a similar way (see attached timeline). Similar to our country's terrorism threat levels, coronavirus started as a low threat and has quickly moved up one level after another until we find ourselves at significant and high-risk levels today. Eventually, we'll rework these levels backward but again, this will be a gradual process that will not feel fast enough to most of us. We also need to come to terms with the fact that returning to normal will not mean what it did when we left campus several weeks ago.

At the end of this update, I've included FAQs to address a few of the questions we've been hearing. Not all of them have succinct answers but I've attempted to provide as much clarity as possible.

I want to thank you all for your hard work and dedication during these challenging times. In the past few days, I've shared both frustrations and laughter with several of you. We've shared successes and good ideas. I've been proud of our commitment to keep our students first. I also want to reassure you that we recognize the difficult challenge still ahead for all of us. There are many questions for which we do not yet have adequate answers. There are new stressors which can be exhausting. It will be hard on some days to stay optimistic or productive. Give yourself some grace. Give those around you and attempting to manage through this some grace as well. Grace as in courteous goodwill. Grace as in acceptance of difficult truths. Grace as in finding strength to endure situations we did not want to experience. Grace as in marshalling our better natures even when it would be easier to wallow in the bitter. I appreciate your flexibility, your creativity and your innovation. Now, more than ever, our mission is critical – we sustain life.

Dean Cathann Kress

FAQs

When will we be back to work?

The answer to what seems like a simple question is quite complex and with too many variables to be certain. What I can say is that this is going to be around for a while. We are taking our cues from the status of the spread of COVID-19 and given current various projections, we're weeks away at even hitting the peak. I think we'll need to weather that peak before we can even talk about any degree of pre-COVID-19 normalcy. I can't be any more descriptive than this, but it will be some time before we will be able to allow faculty and staff into their labs and spaces outside the small group of exemptions we'll be granting that align with the Governor's orders around critical agricultural work and the university's order around critical work and maintenance of our spaces.

Why does it seem that some of the college and university communication or guidance has contradicted itself?

I recognize that as this situation has evolved, it may have seemed that guidance changed drastically and quickly. From my perspective, working with other leadership, I would characterize the communication and guidance as evolving. What was true or permitted yesterday may not be permitted today – and what is true or permitted today may not be true or permitted tomorrow. I know the changes have created some cognitive whiplash, but it is important that during this time we don't lose sight that our current reality is shaped by the spread of the virus. All decisions are being made with a focus on keeping our people as healthy and safe as possible. That viral spread dictates

decisions and actions. So, in living in these times of cognitive dissonance, it's understandable that we can lose track of how we got to where we are today. Although it feels like we've arrived at our current state as a university overnight, it has truly been a constantly evolving process – and one that will continue to evolve as the pandemic plays out.

I think my research is critical – can I move forward and get back to the lab/field/space as long as I engage in social distancing?

Every researcher believes their research is critical – and that's the way it should be. We don't hire faculty at a world-class university and college if they don't believe their research is critical in solving problems and improving humanity. For our COVID-19 reality, critical takes on a clear definition and we take our cues from the Governor's orders and state and federal agencies as to how to define critical. We know that halting research is going to cause possible long-term effects to research programs and faculty trajectories. Some short-term measures are in place (e.g. year extension for probationary tenure-track faculty), but we'll have to take the new consequences as they come and to some degree, need to wait until we surpass the bulk of the pandemic to accurately assess the aftermath and respond accordingly. I know it seems like you could practice distancing in a lab, or a greenhouse, or a field but it's unrealistic that we can sanitize and maintain the facilities to ensure everyone's safety. In addition, no one operates alone and to gear up requires supplies, support, and resources. Some supplies are currently unavailable, some support would require us to expose others to potential transmission, and some resources need to be conserved.

Can I come to campus/my lab/my field if I maintain social distancing?

Only critical personnel who have been designated as such through HR are authorized to be in facilities. There has been continuous and clear notification that there are too many people on campus.

You cannot continue on-site work without approval because you are practicing physical distancing and wiping down labs. You can't sterilize an entire lab, and this is not allowed.

Every time staff and faculty come on campus, they are risking other staff, the health care providers, our patients and the community. You or someone you love may be the next patient because you have come in to do non-mission critical work.

Faculty and staff are allowed to pick up needed items from campus ONE TIME ONLY. It is asked that personnel do not pick up as a group to keep social distancing practices intact. It is also asked for personnel to check first with departmental chair as there may be pick up scheduling already in place.

What will the next academic year look like?

Again, there are too many variables and not enough information, but I can share some thoughts. First, the decisions we make today will dictate our capacities and abilities for next year. This hiring and spending pause is important in ensuring we have funding in place to address any deficits we may accrue. We already know that state agencies are being cut 20% at this point. Although we are a state entity and not a state agency, we know this will affect our bottom line. Important – and ethical – decisions, such as the student housing refund, will also affect our bottom line. Universities around the country like Ohio State will be coping with these financial consequences. We are trying to be

mindful about spending commitments now so we can have options for the next academic year.

How can we continue to support our students' and our own mental well-being?

Service delivery has been modified to provide ongoing support to students via technology. As always, CCS is here for students providing confidential mental health services. Faculty, staff, and students may also reach out to CFAES Mental Health Professional, David Wirt, directly at wirt.9@osu.edu. Ongoing and expanded CCS resources include:

- [Phone Screening appointments for all enrolled Ohio State students](#)
- [“Let’s Talk” a brief and confidential consultation with a CCS clinician](#)
- [Mental Health Strategies Video Series](#)

[Stay up to date with CCS and find additional resources here.](#)

Friday, April 3 and April 10 from 3pm to 4pm we are hosting a new drop-in workshop for students: [Moving through COVID-19 Together](#)

- [Ohio State’s Employee Assistant Program \(EAP\) continues to be a robust resource in assisting faculty and staff in managing stress. CFAES Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will be hosting an information about this fantastic resource on April 10. Go to <https://equityandinclusion.cfaes.ohio-state.edu/news/registration-open-second-information-session-ohio-state-university-employee-assistance-program> for details and registration](#)

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