



March 15, 2020

Greetings YCCD Faculty and Staff,

I know that you are receiving numerous messages regarding our Colleges' and District Coronavirus (COVID-19) response Status; please read this one in detail.

I would like to start by thanking all of you for your continued dedication and support for students. There are many unknowns about Coronavirus and during these times of ambiguity, one of the most important things we can do is exactly that – to remain calm and create clarity in what seemingly may look chaotic. Your health and safety and that of our students is of greatest importance during this developing pandemic and we must balance that with the need to continue to serve our students and communities at the very time they need us to be anchors in this uncertainty.

We understand that there is uncertainty and concern amongst our students, faculty and staff. These are ambiguous times. We share that concern, and are working diligently to help alleviate that concern with timely information and answers to questions. The leadership teams of the Colleges and the District Services are responding, as quickly as practical, to this situation and for what we believe is in the best interest of our students, the faculty, and staff of the district. We are in daily contact with local public health officials throughout the district to monitor the situation in the communities we serve, and we are using their knowledge along with resources from state and federal agencies to inform our actions.

Current Status

Here is the current status of COVID-19 spread, as of the writing of this email:

There are no diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in any community in the YCCD service area; there diagnosed cases in Yolo and Placer Counties but outside our service area. Accordingly, under California Department of Public Health Guidance, we have remained at a posture of monitoring, educating and preparing in the event that those circumstances change. Various local, state and school bodies are making decisions regarding their posture based on their specific conditions. As you may know, all but two of our counties (Colusa and Glenn), the State of California and our Federal Government have all declared "States of Emergency" as a proactive posture to marshal emergency authorities and access emergency resources to deal with the current and possible future extent of the spread of this new strain of influenza.

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As of this writing, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) there are 335 diagnosed cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in California, with 6 deaths and 6 recoveries; there are 3,052 diagnosed cases in the U.S. with 60 deaths and 56 recoveries and 166,229 total cases world-wide (of which 80,199 are active in “mild condition” and 5,921 are active and “serious”) with 6,494 deaths and 76,615 recoveries. Needless to say, these numbers are updated regularly and will have changed by the time you read this.

By way of comparison, according to the CDC in this year’s flu season (the CDC characterizes the U.S. flu season as running from October 1 through May 30) thus far there have been between 36 million and 51 million cases of flu illness; between 17 million and 24 million cases of flu medical visits; between 370,000 and 670,000 flu-related hospitalizations and between 22,000 and 55,000 flu deaths in the United States alone. There have been several recent high flu-related mortality years including the 2009-10 season (which included the then-new H1N1 (“Swine Flu”) that alone accounted for approximately 284,000 deaths world-wide and 12,000 in the U.S.) and the 2017-18 season which saw about 62,000 U.S. flu-related deaths.

The challenge with COVID-19, as with previous “new” influenza strains such as H1N1 in 2009, is that current flu vaccines are not effective and the development of new antiviral often takes from 6 to 18 months. So, in order to avoid a repeat of the experience with H1N1, health officials are advising a rigorous framework of preparation and quarantine until a vaccine is available.

Thus far, for COVID-19, the vast majority of diagnosed infections are in Asia (primarily China and South Korea) where testing has been more extensive and Europe (Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Norway, U.K., Netherlands and Sweden) and the Middle East (Iran). WHO officials have acknowledged that the China and South Korea’s containment strategies have substantially slowed the growth rate; there are very few new cases being reported in either country. In China for example, since December the total numbers stand at 80,849 diagnosed cases with 3,199 deaths, 66,931 recovered, 10,719 active cases and of those 3,226 are still critical.

Many health officials are also acknowledging that, like most influenza, COVID-19 is not as virulent in warmer climates. It is quite likely that we will continue to see a slowing of transmission rates as the northern hemisphere transitions in to Spring and Summer; this is consistent with influenza patterns every season. It is also possible that there will not be a COVID-19-specific antiviral in production by the start of the next flu season.

So all of this to say, as testing increases in the U.S. we may see some confirmed cases in our region although local health officials still deem the risk of exposure to be low. Regardless, it is prudent that we employ strategies, as advised, to further reduce the risk of exposure both as a short-term solution and also as a plan for future outbreaks.

Pandemic Response

To date - state officials have advised that our pandemic response plans should anticipate these conditions continuing at least through the end of March, possibly longer. As you know, several of our region's school districts have made the decision to cancel classes and close schools through their respective Spring Breaks. In each case these actions have been based on specific conditions that those leaders have had to weigh in the balance. In our case, we are aligning our actions with those of other colleges and universities in our region and state. Our strategy is aligned with those of other higher education institutions to move instruction and critical student services to "remote" strategies and keep campuses open for operations especially to support those students who rely on our facilities and technology infrastructure.

As you know at the end of last week, we decided that all face-to-face classes are cancelled for Monday and Tuesday (March 16 and 17) to provide time and support for faculty and staff to develop short-term solutions to resume instruction and services on Wednesday March 18 and at least through the end of March. (For those faculty who are inexperienced in online instruction – here are two recent articles in the Chronicle of Higher Education that you might find insightful - <https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Make-Your-Online-Pivot/248239> and <https://insidehighered.com/advice/2020/03/11/practical-advice-instructors-faced-abrupt-move-online-teaching-opinion>).

As of this writing, our planning is to resume normal operations on April 6 following Spring Break; we will be monitoring conditions throughout and will adjust that date accordingly.

Emergency Status

Effective today, March 15, 2020, I am invoking an "Emergency Status" which transitions us to Phase 2 of our * Coronavirus Response Plan for all of YCCD. We have directed the Colleges' and District Services leadership to have completed the **implementation of this transition no later than the start of classes March 18, 2020**. This transition includes:

- Authorize faculty to utilize remote education for continuity of instruction and services
- Extend and/or adjust hours of Colleges' library, tutoring, instructional and computer labs and related support services
- Limit visitors to College Campuses and District Offices
- Closely monitor student absences
- Cancel all nonessential travel
- Cancel all large events, community events and athletic events
- Provide access to community resources and support for anxiety, fear and stress
- Identify and plan for the continuity of all essential services and suspension of remaining services
- Identify and plan to restore additional key services should the emergency status continue beyond April 6, 2020
- Develop a plan to return to full operations (date to be determined, current plan is April 6, 2020)

**A more complete copy of the District's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Plan can be found on the Coronavirus page at www.yccd.edu*

Essential Services versus Essential Personnel

There has been some discussion and confusion regarding the impact to faculty and staff under these conditions. So let me state firstly that all YCCD faculty, staff, and administrators are *essential* to the success of our students, our colleges and our programs; there are no *non-essential personnel* in YCCD. That said, there are certain services and tasks that, under emergency circumstances, will be 'deprioritized' as non-essential; some for a short-duration emergency and some that would have to be restored under a longer-duration emergency. For purposes of this planning, we have directed College and District Services leadership to consider any thing longer than 2 weeks as a "long-duration" emergency and to identify which services must be continued during the anticipated short-duration of this emergency status but to anticipate that we may extend the status beyond Spring Break if conditions warrant. We have also directed leadership to determine which services can be delivered remotely and which must be delivered on-site at campus and district offices.

Emergency Status Assignments

This is an emergency; accordingly, we will ask faculty, staff and administrators whose duties have been deemed "non-essential" during this emergency to volunteer to assume duties that have been deemed "essential." It will be critical to our continued mission that we extend hours of operations of various instructional support services to ensure students can remain on the path to their academic goals. Accordingly, we are asking every one of us to work within our teams and with our leadership to identify which functions must be continued for the short-term, which may need to be restored if this emergency status must be continued, and which can wait until we return to normal operations and then with the time available from those less-essential functions to work within our teams to take on essential tasks. We have directed the College and District Services leadership to collaboratively develop this list of essential services by the end of the day tomorrow (March 16, 2020) for review in a Chancellor's Cabinet planning meeting on Tuesday morning. In order to ensure employees are represented, district administration is meeting and conferring with the various employee representatives.

Long-term implications and Emergency Planning

It is likely we will transition out of this "emergency status" if not after Spring Break then shortly thereafter. Certainly, this may not be the case but this is what we are basing currently planning. That said, we are also planning in the event it is prolonged. Regardless, next fall the flu season will return and quite possibly there will not yet be a COVID-19 antivirus so we should at least be planning for a repeat. Moreover, as we know well in YCCD, we are highly susceptible to other crises. Several of our campuses are vulnerable to wildfire, both the campuses themselves and more importantly those students faculty and staff; several years ago, half our district was impacted by the flood-warning evacuations from the threat of the Oroville Dam collapse; last year all of our District was impacted by air quality from the Camp Fire; several of our campuses and many of our faculty and staff were impacted by power safety shutdowns. Whether it is the Coronavirus or some other crisis, next academic year we are likely to need to implement lessons learned from this event.

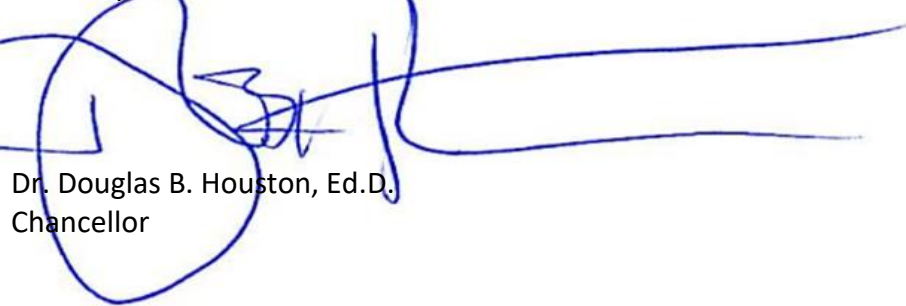
A final note

Nine years ago, I was interviewing for the position of YCCD Chancellor. I observed then, and commented on this with those of you involved in the process, that the faculty and staff of YCCD had a remarkable resilience and passionate dedication to one another and to the students you serve. That was true then and it is all the more true today; our recent accreditation findings affirm the work that you have done to improve relations and to leverage individual dedication in to cohesive team cultures. Our success in surpassing the tests over the past five years is due to you and your dedication. This test will soon fade behind and leave us stronger, wiser and more focused on the purpose we hold dear.

As I have said in earlier communique, your health and welfare and that of our students is of highest priority. While we have good reason to believe that our campuses and offices remain low risk to Coronavirus transmission, I ask that each of us make individual decisions based on our own health circumstances and those of our families. If you are sick or believe you have been exposed, stay home; if you can work remotely, even if not in your primary responsibilities, please discussion with your team and leadership. If you believe you are at high risk of for infection and chose to self-quarantine, please do so; again, if you can work remotely then please discuss options with your team and leadership.

Thank you once again for all that you do for our students, our communities and one another.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical stroke.

Dr. Douglas B. Houston, Ed.D.
Chancellor