



Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting – March 17, 2020

Good afternoon, Vikings. You have joined Elizabeth City State University's Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting.

I am Chancellor Karrie Dixon, and I will provide an update on ECSU's response to the coronavirus, COVID-19, as well as answer questions that were submitted via email.

We want to provide you with as much information and resources as we can to prepare our campus community as we address this evolving situation.

To answer questions as they arrive during this Town Hall meeting, I will be joined by Dr. Farrah Ward, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Gary Brown, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Rickey Freeman, Emergency Management, and Paula Bowe, Director of Human Resources.

If we are not able to answer all of your questions, we will address them as quickly as possible.

First, we know and understand this is a very serious situation, and we have been working with the University of North Carolina System and Albemarle Regional Health Services to ensure the health and well-being of our faculty, staff and students.

I want to let you know there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 on the ECSU campus at this time.

To protect our faculty, staff and students, the UNC System has released and continues to release guidance about the operations of the constituent institutions. This guidance does align with the Executive Order issued from North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper.



Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting – March 17, 2020

I will share the guidance along with the changes we are making here at ECSU to support that guidance.

Per the UNC System, “All UNC System institutions will remain open and continue to deliver high-quality instruction for our students.”

ECSU is not closed. Let me say that again, ECSU is not closed.

Recent guidance from the UNC System states, “In order to substantially reduce the number of students on campus and in university housing, each constituent institution will instruct students who occupy university housing to remain at, or return to, their permanent residences unless granted an exception by the institution; exceptions will be limited to situations where students establish significant need to remain in university housing.”

Based on this most recent guidance from the UNC System, students are instructed not to return to campus after spring break.

We have been asked if students can take their belongings home. We ask that students pack as if they were not to return to campus for an uncertain amount of time.

While residence halls are open until 12 noon this Saturday, March 21, we are encouraging students to leave as soon as possible. If students are not able to leave today, they should contact the Office of Housing and Residence Life at 252-335-3761.

ECSU will establish an exception process that allows students to remain in university housing if they establish a legitimate and significant need to do so.

If students need to request an exception, they should contact the Office of Housing and Residence Life.



Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting – March 17, 2020

We have been asked lots of questions about refunds, and at this time we do not have an answer. The UNC System is working on that question, and as soon as we have guidance, we will be sure to let our campus community know.

We understand our students have been concerned about spring break travel and the risk of students returning to campus after visiting areas with high volumes of confirmed cases. With the new guidance directing students to stay home, this will help alleviate the concerns of students returning to campus.

If a student receives an exception to return to campus and begins to show symptoms, we do have a plan for quarantine to isolate that student and protect the rest of the campus community.

Please remember, if you think you may have been exposed or you start to show symptoms, call the Student Health Center at 252-335-3267.

To ensure that we adhere to the guidance provided from the UNC System and in-line with precautionary measures related to COVID-19, consideration is being given to all aspects of the university experience.

To this end, students should expect that during this time of increased concern, all precautions are being taken including with the dining experience.

Beginning today the cafeteria shifted to a take-out only option. Both Bedell Hall and the Grill are operating under normal hours of operation this week.

To fall in line with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, students remaining on campus should take their meals back to the residence halls to limit gatherings of more than 10 individuals.



Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting – March 17, 2020

Per the UNC System, “We are working to maximize flexibility in how we deliver education in order to limit the potential impact of the coronavirus at our institutions. All UNC System institutions will transition from in-person instruction to a system of alternative course delivery.”

At ECSU, alternative course delivery will begin on March 30 and last indefinitely.

We have been asked what does remote instruction or alternative course delivery mean. In short, it means online instruction.

To ensure ECSU is prepared to offer online instruction, we have extended spring break. Spring break starts today at the close of business.

We are committed to providing a quality education, and these extra three business days allow our faculty the time needed to prepare for online instruction.

If any classes require in-person instruction and attendance, the faculty of those classes will communicate directly with his or her students.

As we transition to online instruction on March 30, we understand this will be an adjustment for our students. Please know, we are working to ensure their academic success during this period of time.

I want to highlight a few of the things we are doing to support our students.

First, we sent a survey to students to assess their access to computers and WiFi at home. All students need to complete and return that survey before they leave for spring break.

The campus will continue to seek ways to support students during this transition.



Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting – March 17, 2020

We understand that some students have never taken an online course and may not adapt as easily to online instruction. We will be providing additional information to support them through this transition.

Most importantly, we do not want students to withdraw. We know this is not an ideal situation, but it is a temporary situation. To give students an opportunity to experience this alternative instruction, we have extended the withdraw date to April 10. This gives students two weeks to experience this transition before they have to make any decisions, but we do not want our students to withdraw.

Advisors will be available for meetings. Students can request a meeting with their advisor via email. Additional information regarding how we will handle pre-registration will be forthcoming.

Faculty will have virtual office hours to meet with students. Those office hours will be posted on Blackboard and e4U.

We have many students who participate in work study. The Office of Financial Aid is working with the U.S. Department of Education to determine how we will move forward. We will let those students know as soon as we have those answers.

While you are continuing your studies at home, if you find that you have been exposed to the virus or if you have contracted the virus, please contact the Student Health Center at 252-335-3267. We will be able to contact your faculty on your behalf.

If students are experiencing any stress or anxiety during this time, they can contact Counseling Services at 252-335-3273.

We have received further guidance from the UNC System related to events and meetings as well as university-sanctioned travel.



Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting – March 17, 2020

“Universities must suspend, cancel, or postpone any event or gathering that will assemble 50 or more people in a single space, such as a single room, meeting hall, conference room, auditorium, stadium, arena, theater, or any other confined indoor or outdoor space.”

However, we have canceled all campus events through March 31, 2020. All athletic practices and competitions for the season also have been canceled.

Since we do not know how long we must take these precautions, we will make determinations about April events by March 31.

We have been asked if commencement will be canceled or postponed, and if the deadline for graduation fees will be extended. We do not know at this time. As soon as we receive guidance from the UNC System, we will let our campus community know.

You can find a list of canceled events on our coronavirus webpage.

Per the UNC System, “University-sponsored in-state travel to gatherings of 50 or more people is suspended, and all travel outside the state is suspended. All UNC System institutions will recall all students who are studying abroad and suspend any study abroad programs scheduled to commence between now and July 1.”

This travel ban is for faculty, staff and students, and ECSU has canceled all planned travel.

We will work to reschedule study abroad programs and will notify those students once those programs are rescheduled.



Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting – March 17, 2020

So far, most of these updates have been for students. Now, I want to take a moment to address our faculty and staff. Your health and wellbeing are just as important to us.

When it comes to travel, when you are canceling travel arrangements be sure to call and cancel hotel reservations, rental cars, airline tickets, conference registrations and any other items that you have booked whether it's on your personal credit card or issued Travel Card.

Also, remember to withdraw your requisition from Viking Shoppes. Please make sure that you retain all receipts for the cancellation.

The university, while remaining open, will do so with minimal on-campus operations.

The UNC System is granting institutions the authority to use telework, to identify mandatory employees needed for continued operations and to exercise discretion for granting paid administrative leave, when appropriate.

Many functions of the university can be completed remotely, and will begin doing so tomorrow, March 18. Employees should have received notification from their supervisors about their status and if they are able to work remotely.

Allowing employees to telework while the campus remains open aligns with the directive of social distancing.

Several on-campus operations will continue including receipt of mail and packages and our cashiers' office. We will post a list of on-campus operations, so individuals know who will be on campus.

If you have been exposed to the coronavirus and need to self-quarantine, talk to your supervisor.



Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting – March 17, 2020

If you are sick due to the symptoms of a cold, flu, or COVID-19; or are caring for a dependent with such symptoms, you will receive paid administrative leave.

I do want to thank our entire Viking community for their hard work, commitment and support during this time of transition.

This has not been an easy time for any of us as we adjust our operations, make tough decisions, and change how we do business. And, these adjustments are happening daily.

Our faculty and staff are dedicated to the success of our students and this university, and they have shown that dedication as they work to implement the guidance from the UNC System.

One of the elements of Viking Pride is to be resilient. We have shown resilience during this stressful an time. Viking Pride is alive and well on this campus!

We will now address any questions that have been submitted during this Town Hall Meeting.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this Coronavirus Response Virtual Town Hall Meeting.

If we were not able to answer all of the questions, we will work to provide those answers.

If you have additional questions, continue to submit those to stopcorona@ecsu.edu.

Thank you, and be safe!