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All UVI Graduate and Undergraduate Classes to be Held Online 'Out of Abundance of Caution and Care' For Community in Wake of Coronavirus Pandemic

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UVI St. Croix Campus By. KAREEM ALEXANDER FOR REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY

The University of the Virgin Islands said late Thursday that in light of the evolving coronavirus pandemic in the United States and globally, out of an abundance of caution and care for the UVI community members — some of whom the university said may be in high-risk groups — the university said it will extend Spring Break for students until Sunday, March 22, 2020, and transition to online learning for all graduate and undergraduate classes beginning Monday, March 23.

During this time, faculty and instructional designers will finalize preparations for the switch to a virtual course delivery model. Accordingly, all in-person and videoconference classes are suspended, UVI said. The university said it will continue its Spring academic semester, albeit the instructional delivery will change and classes will resume via online instruction only beginning on Monday, March 23.

“The University has been closely monitoring the developments of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The health, safety and well-being of our UVI Community, on and off campus, is our top priority,” said UVI President Dr. David Hall. “At this time, there is no indication that the UVI campuses are affected but contingency planning is well underway to mitigate the possibility of the spread of the virus.”

“We did not make these decisions lightly but feel that this is the most prudent course of action at this time. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization have emphasized the importance of taking active measures to contain the spread of the virus in communities and mitigate the risk to vulnerable populations,” Dr. Hall said. “Our actions are consistent with the recommendations of leading health officials on how to limit the spread of the virus and are also consistent with similar decisions made by a number of our peer institutions and other universities across the nation.”

Academic and Residential Life

1. Given the new online only format, UVI said it's making significant changes to its residential experiences to encourage “social distancing.” As a result, students should remain at home following the end of Spring Break.
2. All students residing in UVI residential facilities must collect their belongings and move out of their spaces between Friday, March 13, and Saturday, March 21 by 4:30p.m. All residential facilities will remain closed for the remainder of the academic semester. The university said it will develop a thoughtful plan to prorate housing and meal allowances.
3. UVI's Residence Life and Student Affairs teams are said to be readying plans to assist students and families with their departures. Residence Life and Housing Operations will be following-up with residential students with specific instructions. Students who may have exceptional and compelling housing related extenuating circumstances may contact the director of Residence Life on their respective campus for additional guidance. The university said it will review requests from students to remain on campus due to communicated extenuating circumstances that may, for example, relate to their inability to return home due to restrictions created by the COVID-19 pandemic; such exemptions however will be very limited, UVI said.
4. Students can expect to hear from their faculty about plans for the continuation of their classes.
5. Faculty should expect to hear from the Dean's offices about their school or college plans for transitioning to online learning and other alternative learning options.
6. The university is developing contingency plans for students and faculty who might need technical assistance and support during and through the transition to remote learning.

"Students, please know that our academic leaders are working tirelessly to make any accommodation necessary to ensure that your academic progress is not slowed by this decision. If you are on track to graduate this semester, you will stay on track to graduate," the university said.

Employees

UVI said it will remain open during this temporary interruption of in-person classes. Staff members will continue to follow regular work schedules, and faculty members will continue to present coursework to their students — albeit in a different format. Employees who have health vulnerabilities or who are sick are advised to notify their supervisor, and follow guidelines and procedures outlined in the Employee Handbook. Individuals who are sick are reminded to stay home and/or seek medical attention, as necessary, so as not to affect others.

Public Events

"In this new world of social distancing, we will minimize large and other gatherings on campus. Accordingly, a number of events have already been cancelled including our upcoming Charter Day Ceremony (March 16) and Afternoon on the Green (March 22)" UVI said.

“We recognize that this transition will be disruptive and ask for your continued patience and understanding as we address this unprecedented challenge and as developments occur,” said Mr. Hall. “We recognize the tremendous anxiety our community is feeling right now but our UVI Community is a resilient one. We have weathered many storms before with fortitude, grace and compassion, albeit of a different nature. UVI is a special place and we will together overcome this challenge.”

The UVI community is urged to remain vigilant with their health and to continue to monitor the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/>, World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/>, US Department of State <https://www.state.gov/coronavirus/> and other credible sources available.