

Douglas Education Center (DEC) Institutional Response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

March 26, 2020 - 5:00pm

Dear DEC Students:

We appreciate everyone's patience as our school made this unique transition to online learning the past week. We understand something like this comes with challenges and frustrations for you, as well as our faculty and staff.

As we noted in our previous memo, dated March 16, 2020, we were required to close our on-ground classes "**beginning Tuesday, March 17, for at least two weeks and until further notice.**" The governor has mandated for all non-essential businesses to shut down, and determined that our institution, like all other schools (and many other types of businesses), are non-essential and our school must transition to online delivery formats throughout this emergency. For many industries, a mandate such as this can have crippling effects, and there is not one of us who has yet to feel the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the last week, the PA governor has also extended the state's public school system closure through April 6, 2020.

Unfortunately, the educational sector is impacted by many moving parts, and our school must follow guidance from various entities, including multiple state boards, the PA Department of Education, the PA Department of State, the PA Governor's Office, the Federal Government, the Federal Department of Education, as well as our accreditor. Even while the details and requirements set forth remain extremely fluid and are released at different times, the common theme that remains for us all is your safety. Each of these governmental and regulatory bodies urged schools to train in online / distance learning methods as a transition until students can safely return to school. This continuity would ensure there is no disruption to your financial aid and/or academic standing. Closure is not a feasible option, so we have complied by transitioning our classes to be online through this emergency period.

On March 16, 2020, the guidance initially given to our school through the above regulatory and government bodies directed us toward a two-week on-ground closure and online transition. **DEC has followed their guidance and took an additional step to set up our online classes to support up to four weeks of online instruction, if warranted. We will continue to update you all as we learn more and we receive additional information on what we are permitted to do. Currently, no agency or governmental body has given us an exact date on when we can resume on-ground classes.**

The current online environment is the best method to help overcome this terrible pandemic. I cannot imagine the stress, anxiety, and uncertainty each of you must be feeling, but I guarantee you we are working around the clock to ensure you remain safe and your education remains uncompromised. Over this transition, each of you received an email outlining our Learning Management System (LMS) Canvas. It included expectations from you for your courses as well as what to do when you need help. We are committed to working with any of you who may have trouble accessing computer equipment or reliable internet service.

Your instructors are remaining flexible through the transition and have been asked to work with those of you who may have difficulty attending to or submitting work to your online classes. We also have a dedicated team of staff here to support you and help you, led by our Education and Information Technology (IT) Departments. Please reach out to them to voice your concerns on this matter and if you need additional support / guidance as needed:

- Education (General Concerns / Questions / Guidance):
 - Julian Imbrescia, Vice President of Academic Affairs, julian@dec.edu, 724-653-2213
 - Renee McDowell, Senior Academic Affairs Coordinator, rmcdowell@dec.edu, 724-653-2212
- Information Technology (Technology Concerns / Questions):
 - John Sechrist, Executive Director of Information Technology, jsechrist@dec.edu, 724-361-8889
 - Open a Ticket at www.dec.edu/support

Additionally, to help everyone stay the most up-to-date on what is occurring, our IT Department has added the following resources to our DEC Mobile App (the app can be downloaded for free on Android and Apple Stores from your devices). I strongly encourage you to download it if you have not already.

- A new button to the home screen named “PA COVID19 News.” This pulls the latest Pennsylvania COVID-19 updates from the PA Governor’s Office.
- A red banner at the top of every page in the app that links to www.dec.edu/coronavirus (our official Coronavirus page) and when tapped, it opens the link.
- Push notifications from the app notifying you of important developments and updates immediately. Archived notifications will be housed in the newly-added Alerts button, which will also contain other urgent information.

These are extraordinary times, and we are all doing our best to ensure we meet the needs of everyone. We know that this has not been an easy transition and expect that this situation will continue to introduce unforeseen challenges and questions. We ask for your patience and flexibility as we implement this transitional online approach together.

Please take care of yourselves and each other and know that your health and safety remain paramount to our educational mission. Like you, we are hopeful for the swift end to this pandemic and look forward to the return of everyone’s health and safety to continue on-ground instruction.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey D. Imbrescia
CEO / President