

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

March 12, 2020

Dear Members of the DEC Community:

I am writing to update you on the steps we are taking to protect the health and well-being of our community amid the global health risk posed by coronavirus.

As of today, there have not been any presumed cases of the virus reported in southwestern Pennsylvania, but we will update you all as we continue to receive information.

The safety and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff is always our top priority. We understand that the rapidly evolving situation with the coronavirus can be unnerving at times, with new information coming to light daily, and even hourly. We are closely monitoring these real-life developments and looking to experts such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) for guidance.

In addition, the Department of Education as well as our accreditor, the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) continue to provide direction on the necessary steps our institution will take to ensure everyone's health and safety.

As a result, we have taken several actions to ensure we are keeping your well-being front and center. You have my personal commitment that we are doing our utmost to protect you all.

WHAT WE'RE DOING:

We have taken a number of steps to serve you better at this time:

1. **Education:** As has been commonly heard on the news, many higher education institutions are switching to an online format. While DEC has permission to deploy online delivery for its courses, we must also acknowledge that as a career school, "hands-on" and "lab/shop" training is integral to your education, development, and ultimate success, and therefore is not a complete "solution" for situations such as these.

This being said, all faculty members have been prepped and alerted to develop plans for each course being taught this semester. In the event of students feeling ill or developing viral symptoms, they are not to attend class and can communicate with their instructors through the email address and any other communicative methods distributed by the instructor. We are working with faculty to ensure that students who are forced to miss class because of illness are

not penalized with their grades. Each instructor has a plan for his or her course based on the content, format, and projects/work being completed at a specific point in time.

Key members and directors of DEC, as well as the Institutional Assessment and Improvement Planning (IAIP) Committee, have all met to discuss our Emergency Preparedness as well as scenarios our school might have to take.

The guidance we receive from our various regulatory and governing bodies is fluid and continually updated to provide us with the best possible information. From our entire campus community to each individual class, we are here to accommodate and address any concerns you might have head-on.

2. **Events:** We are examining all upcoming on- and off-campus events to safeguard the health of our community members and guests. This has already led to some cancellations and postponements, including our upcoming Open House next month. Open House has been postponed until this summer, and information will be distributed at a future point in time. Currently, the upcoming Graduation on May 21 will be occurring as planned, and we will update you all as we learn more.
Field trips, as part of the overall classroom student experience, have all been canceled until further notice. Additionally, all clinics as part of our Cosmetology and Massage Therapy Programs are closed to the public until further notice.
3. **Facilities:** We have established formal protocols for cleaning staff on proper disinfection for touched surfaces, and custodial and maintenance managers are attending special coronavirus training. Additional hand sanitizers and disinfectant wipes have been distributed campus-wide and we will continually monitor the cleaning of our facilities to ensure they remain thorough and compliant.
4. **Staff and Faculty:** We are requiring all employees who are feeling ill to stay home. We have monitored and limited travel for our entire employee community.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. **Be Vigilant:** Stay safe and pay close attention to your physical, emotional, and mental health. Look out for one another, on or off campus. And, please remember the following:
 - a. If you are sick, stay home from school.
 - b. Avoid close contact with those who are already sick.
 - c. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with a tissue or the crook of your arm.
 - d. Wash your hands often with soap and water.
 - e. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
2. **Be in the Know:** We will continue to transmit updates to our campus community. In order to ensure you are on our campus distribution list and to receive texts, go to www.dec.edu/optin and/or text @DECEMERG to 81010

3. **Look to the Experts:** As with all public health situations, DEC primarily relies on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the US Department of Health and Human Services, and the US Department of Education for the best information and productive strategies. Some resources we have found useful regarding coronavirus that you might also find helpful include the following:
- a. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
 - b. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>
 - c. <https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus>
 - d. <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

ADDITIONAL INFO:

If you have additional concerns related to education or student services, you can reach out to Julian Imbrescia, Vice President of Academic Affairs, at 724-653-2213 or julian@dec.edu.

Students with Career Services concerns can reach out to Dana Melvin, Director of Career Services, at 724-653-2217 or dmelvin@dec.edu.

Rest assured, we will continue to monitor this situation closely and provide the latest updates and helpful resources to our website and various channels. In this uncertain environment, we are making complex decisions armed with the best information we have available to us. Our extended DEC family is strong, and we are even more resilient when we face challenges as one united community and when we lead with care and compassion.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey D. Imbrescia
CEO / President