As we are all aware, COVID-19 coronavirus contingency planning has begun in earnest here at LSU as well as at all other large, responsible-citizen-type institutions across the country; again today you should have all received broadcast messages from LSU about several aspects of contingency planning for LSU. The point is not to encourage you to panic. Far from it. LSU manages and coordinates large groups of people who gather together daily, and we will therefore play a role in helping stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus if/when public health authorities determine that a significant risk of community transmission has reached our area. Things do change daily, but to my mind, what is certain are these three points: (1) we need to plan ahead to avoid some of the stress of the situation for you, our students, as well as for faculty and staff; (2) we are keeping health, safety, and well-being foremost in our planning; and (3) we as a large institution may need to play a role in community health and safety, not just our own personal health and safety.

For these reasons, I wanted to reiterate two points and to circulate one temporary policy suspension.

1. **Keep calm.** I would ask you all to remain calm and not spread misinformation or rumors. I am NOT sending this contingency update email in order to gin up panic and rumor! We do now have some cases in the state, in New Orleans, but it’s still not going to do any of us any good either (a) to panic or act irrationally or (b) to pretend we are public health experts. Both will be unhelpful. One resource you may wish to check from time to time is the LSU update page: https://lsu.edu/coronavirus/index.php. It links out to the CDC page, the WHO page, and other references. It will also contain all LSU notices that come out via email. One thing to know is that an LSU campus-wide emails roll out to about 30,000+ people through an imperfect email system. It’s not near-instantaneous like Twitter. That means that an email may get to the person next to you several hours before it gets to you. You can keep up via Twitter if you like, though: @LSU

2. **Classes are continuing as scheduled for now.** As you will have seen in the news and the broadcast emails of today, going online at some point is a real option, although we are not there yet. As explained in the email you have already received today, no dates are certain; they cannot be at this time. I do see in today’s campus emails some references to LSU’s spring break as a time around which cancellation decisions might be made, if the facts on the ground do not radically change before that time. That spring break runs March 23-27. I will do what I can to keep you posted, and I know the University will as well.

3. **Class attendance—temporary policy change.** In the interest of community health, and because we are in uncharted territory, we are going to change one thing for the next two weeks, which is how we enforce our attendance policy. The Faculty Executive Committee has authorized me to announce this change on a temporary basis while we all watch for how matters progress in our area.

   **First:** Regular and punctual class attendance is still required. (That has not been suspended! Class matters—good stuff happens there.)

   **Second:** If you feel ill, however, you are encouraged not to attend or to enter the building.

   **Third:** To encourage participation in the “stay home when ill” policy, the practice of passing and signing roll sheets will be suspended for two weeks, from Thursday, March 12 through Friday, March 27.

   **Fourth:** Any and all absences starting tomorrow, March 12, and through the end of Friday, March 27, will not accrue toward the total absences allowed within the Law Center’s absence policy (as provided within the Catalog).

I would like to emphasize that this is not intended to be a green light for healthy students to sleep in, skip class, or “take a spring break.” Many students have complained about our attendance policy over the years as overly “paternalistic” and not befitting a professional school—indicating to us that professional students can be trusted to attend class without an attendance policy. To date, in order to ensure ABA compliance, our attendance policy has remained in place. I hope attendance patterns in the next two weeks can begin to prove those students’ points—rather than the other way around.
Important Notes: (a) This temporary policy suspension does not itself affect any due dates or deadlines for student work; such matters remain within the discretion of individual faculty members, as they always have been. (b) This policy suspension also does not affect the hours requirements for field placements and clinics. (c) This temporary policy suspension will be effective through the end of the day on Friday, March 27, unless the faculty Executive Committee or the full faculty acts to reauthorize it. (d) For the sake of clarity, I will also point out the following: instructors who take attendance into account in determining whether to adjust a student’s final score for “classroom participation” will not consider a student’s non-attendance during this two-week period in that “participation” calculus. (e) If as of the effective date of this temporary policy suspension, a student has already missed too many classes and is in the process of being dropped from a course, this temporary policy suspension does not change that result.

We are in uncharted territory, and it is ever-changing. I will tell you what I just told all faculty and staff in an email announcing the same class attendance policy suspension: As difficult as it is to prepare for an unknown and dynamic situation, we want to be as prepared as we can and to support our students, staff, and faculty while we do so.

Thank you for your attention, and for being proactive—and not panicking. Please let me know if you have any questions.

All my best (and wash your hands!),

Dean Lockridge

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