



Last updated March 23, 2020, 11:18 a.m.

Message from Chancellor Matos Rodríguez

Dear CUNY community,

As I reported this week, 95 percent of CUNY's 50,000 course sections have been converted to distance learning instruction, and 95 percent of CUNY faculty and staff are already working remotely. It's been inspiring to witness the resilience, fortitude and innovation that have been on display across the university in the face of this unprecedented health emergency.

Our efforts have now positioned us to fully support Governor Cuomo's [New York State on PAUSE](#) executive order. To this end, effective Monday, March 23, all 25 CUNY campuses will expand their social distancing efforts by further reducing or modifying some of the programmatic and support services currently in place.

- Basic business operations will operate remotely, with limited on-campus presence permitted for mail pick-ups and other selected needs.
Administrative departments such as Financial Aid, Admissions and Human Resources will continue to maintain telephone and email operations.
- Computer labs and libraries will close, except for limited times in which campuses might need to distribute loaner laptops and tablets.
- All research projects must ramp down/suspend unless they can be conducted remotely and all colleges shall activate their corresponding emergency protocols related to animal care, laboratory equipment and research materials.
- All non-essential university-related international and domestic travel is indefinitely suspended. This includes the suspension of all Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 study abroad programs. In terms of travel, the [Department of](#)

[State's Global Health Advisory](#) issued Thursday warns that a shutdown of international travel options is imminent, and that Americans abroad should arrange to immediately return to the U.S., or risk an indefinite stay abroad. CUNY will continue to offer rebooking support to any CUNY student or employee abroad (regardless of citizenship) who is unable to make these arrangements directly with the airline. For additional details, visit the University's comprehensive [Coronavirus Updates page](#).

I want to make clear that these changes do not affect the move to distance learning instruction, which started Thursday and will continue for the duration of the semester.

The very few courses that must hold in-person meetings are going to be suspended effective Monday, March 23, for the duration of the New York State on PAUSE order. This applies to all undergraduate, graduate and continuing education courses that have not yet converted to distance-learning modes. Faculty engaged in these courses are asked to continue to explore, in conversation with their students, ways in which the in-person courses can be converted to distance learning.

If the course's learning outcomes cannot ultimately be achieved via distance learning, the courses could resume once the "pause" is lifted, at which time faculty and students would work to make up for lost time. Given the circumstances, students could also opt to withdraw from the course, or receive a grade of incomplete if appropriate. For in-progress continuing education courses, colleges will communicate options available to students who decide to drop or cannot continue with coursework. The University is currently developing a refund/credit policy for these types of situations related to COVID-19.

To fill the void created by the closure of computer labs, we are in the process of finalizing a large purchase of tablets and laptops for students who need it in order to continue to fully participate in distance learning. We encourage students to take advantage of current offers by cellular carriers and internet service providers to provide free in-home broadband and mobile hotspot services. For information, visit our [CUNY Continuity For Students](#) web page.

Dorms and food pantries will stay open. Students should check their campus website for pantry hours of operation. Child care centers will remain open with the minimum staff needed to address reduced demand. But they are ready to be fully activated as part of the Governor's program to support the child care needs of first

responders' families. Child care center staff should contact their supervisors on a daily basis regarding the need to report to work.

To minimize the risk to essential staff including ITS personnel, custodians, public safety officers and facilities staff, general access to campuses will be closed to the extent possible. Some colleges may allow staff, faculty and students on campus this weekend to collect any personal or work-related materials they need. Thereafter, access to campuses will be limited except by appointment. You should contact your local campus for specific information.

Health officials have warned us that New York City is now experiencing community transmission, in which individuals who have no known contact with infected individuals are testing positive for the virus. The message to all of us now is the same: Act as if you have been exposed, stay home, and monitor for symptoms. To do our part to protect the most vulnerable members of our community, all of us should stay at home as much as possible.

I want to close by thanking all of our essential staff who have continued to report to work on a daily basis. They are selflessly navigating complicated circumstances to enable the uninterrupted continuation of our campus operations; their dedication has made it possible for CUNY students to get the services they need. We owe a debt of gratitude to each of these individuals.

Sincerely,

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Please note that the rapidly evolving nature of this situation necessitates frequent evaluation and modification of our policies and plans, which are fluid and subject to change at any time. To ensure that you have the most up-to-date guidance, directives and resources, please check back frequently with [CUNY.edu/coronavirus](https://www.cuny.edu/coronavirus).