



SADDLEBACK COLLEGE

Covid-19 Update sent via email on Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 9 am

Esteemed colleagues, valued students and those who love and support you:

We are following the Covid-19 outbreak and are taking steps, proactively, to preserve the health and safety of our 26,000 students and 1,400 employees. We take that charge as seriously as our commitment to provide the best education and learning supports one can find--anywhere. We track data from public health agencies almost hourly and have implemented a Covid-19 response plan informed by health and safety experts.

We have only six Covid-19 cases in all of Orange County, none at Saddleback; and none of these six were community-acquired. While a student was tested for Covid-19 at UC Irvine earlier this week and the University announced that it would go online at that time, the student's test came back negative. **Our risk level in Orange County is still low, particularly on our campus.** Thus we have been able to finish out this last week before break with "learning as usual" without posing significant risks of Covid-19 transmission. While our operations after spring break are likely to be quite different, we will continue to make decisions based on data, science and expertise, not fear.

Based on the existence of community acquired Covid-19 throughout much of the world, across our country and in eight counties in California, we have instituted additional cleaning routines on campus to make it as safe as it can be. We are also prepared to move lecture instruction online (go to a "soft" or "partial" closure) after this week. Our College is uniquely positioned to go mostly online because we are already an online leader in the State. With the gift of time we received this week, as Orange County remained at low risk, almost all faculty will be able to move lecture instruction online when we make that move. Please watch the website and check your email over break for updates on our status.

Of course, one of the ways in which we can keep Orange County at low risk and our campus safe is to avoid travel to areas with community-acquired Covid-19, which might result in it coming back to our community and our campus. We've instituted a series of travel-related measures to mitigate risk of Covid-19 exposure at Saddleback.

- (1) We have banned all but essential business travel for the next 30 days. Like many major companies and other colleges, we are cancelling **all** employee travel for trips commencing on 3/16 or in the 30 days that follow. No business travel commencing in that period will be authorized going forward. We are very sorry for those who will miss conferences and other professional opportunities, but we believe that this is a prudent public health measure and one that is now necessary to best protect our students and employees.
- (2) We are advising against foreign travel. Several weeks ago, we expanded our 14-day quarantine requirement beyond China, to include South Korea, Italy, Iran, Japan and Hong Kong. *Any student or college employee who travels to any of these countries must self-quarantine for 14 days upon returning to this country before returning to our campus, even if not required to do so by Homeland Security. Additionally, the federal government just yesterday issued a 30-day travel ban on all of Europe except*

the United Kingdom. This suggests that the U.S. quarantine and travel ban lists are growing, quickly and sometimes unexpectedly. Foreign travel does not seem like a good idea right now, as one might find oneself unable to return or requiring a 14-day quarantine upon return, which could set a student back a whole semester.

- (3)** We are urging careful consideration of all domestic travel plans. Eight counties in California (not Orange) and multiple States across the country are reporting cases of community-acquired Covid-19. We urge employees and students not to travel to communities with evidence of Covid-19 transmission. Please visit the website for the public health department in the county you plan to visit. If they have community-acquired cases of Covid-19, we advise against travel there. **We ask all students and employees to recognize that the risks they take in travel right now are risks they impose on others when they return to our campus. At risk populations are being advised to avoid air and cruise travel altogether. This might be good advice for all who have contact with at risk populations as well.**

Even in a soft close, we will need to maintain some operations and continue most studios and labs on campus. Our ability to maintain even reduced operations and hands-on learning with little risk of Covid-19 transmission, in part depends on measures we take to reduce the risk of Covid-19 introduction to our community. **We're counting on our students and employees to curb travel in order to keep us and our community at low risk for as long as possible.** Public health officials tell us that reducing travel is the most effective public health measure we can take to reduce spread of Covid-19 between communities.

I continue to recommend frequent hand-washing or use of sanitizer, staying home if you are sick, sneezing tightly into your elbow if you must sneeze and avoiding touching your nose, eyes or face except after hand washing or use of hand sanitizer. If you are in circumstances where you would normally shake hands with or hug someone, don't until we're done with Covid-19. I do not recommend use of surgical masks unless you are sick, in which case you should not be here! There is no evidence so far that they have protected wearers from becoming infected.

I know that many of you who work and study at Saddleback are very afraid of contracting this virus. I can assure you that our risk level remains low. **I now ask for your help in keeping our risk level low. If you have travel plans for spring break, please consider a staycation instead.**

There is no higher priority for me and staff and faculty of Saddleback right now than ensuring your health and safety so that your learning can continue. Please let us carry that burden of figuring out how to keep you safe. We're on it. We got this. You focus on studying and achieving your goals. I promise you that we will not take our eyes off the ball while you keep your eyes on the prize.

I'm so glad that you're at Saddleback.

Elliot

Dr. Elliot Stern

President, Saddleback College