



# SADDLEBACK COLLEGE

*Covid-19 Update sent via email on Monday, March 16, 2020 at 9 am*

## Students and Those Who Support You:

Effective 3/16, only students, employees and some contractors will be allowed on our campus. Visitors will not be permitted. This additional safety measure lowers the risk of Covid-19 being introduced on our campus and further decreases the number of people on campus, allowing greater social distancing and less close contact, thereby decreasing the risk of transmission if the virus was to enter our campus.

Students and faculty are on a well-deserved and well-timed Spring break this week. When we resume instruction on Monday, March 23rd, almost all of it will be online for the remainder of March and April, at minimum. Some labs and studio classes and a few lecture classes will be on-ground, as scheduled, but with social distancing (minimum of 3' apart, preferably 6'). Room assignments may change as a result of the need for greater social distancing; so please watch your email and our website in the coming week, as we prepare to implement this "soft close" and sort out room scheduling. Some Professors who don't normally teach online have been training to use Canvas and continue to do so during this, their break, to allow us to move as much instruction as possible online. I am extremely grateful for their responsiveness. I ask your patience if it takes some of your Professors a bit of time to populate course Canvas shells and establish an online routine.

Student support services will also be available online, including counseling and tutoring. Support services will continue to be available on-ground (on campus) as well, though we will use social distancing in those interactions.

We have been planning for this contingency for well over a month and are better positioned than almost any college to make this transition toward online. Nearly 40% of our offerings were already online, we offer nearly 50 credentials completely online and the vast majority of Saddleback professors are savvy users of Canvas and online technology. Saddleback has almost no course success gap between on-ground and online, a rarity among colleges and Universities. We have also been moving toward online availability of student support services for years. We have been planning a Virtual Student Support Center for months. Covid-19 just moved up the timeline a bit!

In short, we are ready for this. There will be mid-course corrections, hiccups and tweaks made along the way; but we got this.

Covid-19 risk in Orange County is still relatively low; but our response is intended to be proactive, to stay ahead of the outbreak and prevent cases on our campus. Our decision-making is also driven by sound public health policy, which tells us that limiting the population on campus and increased social distancing will slow transmission and "flatten the curve" for the country as a whole. If we can get 80% of our students off campus at a time and increase the social distance between our employees and those 20% of students who might still need to be on campus for brief periods, we will be contributing to a nationwide effort to slow transmission of Covid-19 until this outbreak wave descends, as it has in several Asian countries where similar measures were taken and the rate of outbreak is now diminishing.

Why then, you might ask, don't we just close altogether and tell all students and employees to stay home and hunker down? A complete shutdown would result in cessation of learning, and this would mean that students would have to make-up lost "seat time" to fulfill credit requirements by the State and our national accrediting body, ACCJC. We are trying to balance our role in "flattening the curve" of the Covid-19 outbreak and ensuring your safety with the need for learning continuity, to avoid our students having to make up class or lab time over the summer or, worse yet, getting a semester behind in their educational plans. Your safety is paramount in that balancing, but the choices are not binary. Staying up and running until March 13, with additional measures to lower risk, allowed us to get halfway through the semester, get mid-terms done and get more Professors trained on Canvas and ready to convert to online instruction. Now we are hoping to get through the next eight weeks of the semester mostly online (or all online if the community spread worsens significantly).

Please know that your safety and your learning are both in good hands because of the choice you made in coming to Saddleback. We are all feeling anxiety about what the next couple of months will bring; but I have every confidence in our College to keep moving forward, whatever gets thrown at us, whatever it takes, to ensure continuity of your learning and keep you safe. On Monday, March 23rd, you're going to resume classes and focus on learning. We're going to focus on keeping our campus safe and getting you through the semester. This is what we do. We got this.

Elliot

Dr. Elliot Stern

President, Saddleback College