



SADDLEBACK COLLEGE

Email message sent to all students on Monday, March 9, 2020

Students:

Since last updating you on the Covid-19 virus a few weeks ago, several more countries have developed outbreaks and some smaller outbreaks have occurred in the U.S., including in California. We have only three cases in Orange County, and all are travel-acquired, not community-acquired. Our risk level is still low, particularly on our campus.

But in light of what has happened in the Seattle area, where a major University, multiple community colleges and an entire school district have shut down all but online learning, and because of the outbreaks elsewhere in California, we have ramped up our prevention measures to best protect you and the 1400 employees I stand beside in supporting you. These additional measures include:

- (1) The development of a Covid-19 response team to advise me and the Acting President of IVC. This team evolved from the Covid-19 preparedness team that has been planning our responses to various risk levels of viral outbreak for over a month.
- (2) Higher prioritization for cleaning of surfaces touched by many individuals in short periods.
- (3) Collaboration between your Professors and instructional administrators to provide some level of learning continuity in the event of a full or partial campus shutdown.
- (4) Tracking of attendance in some classes to establish a baseline if we see some falloff in attendance if the outbreak hits Orange County.
- (5) Expansion of our advisory against travel to China to include South Korea, Italy, Iran, Japan and Hong Kong. *If you or a college employee travels to any of these countries, you 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, I am advising against travel to King or Snohomish Counties in Washington or to Contra Costa, Solano, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties in California. I also caution against travel to any member country of the European Union at this time, as free borders with Italy will likely allow the outbreak in Italy to spread throughout Europe within days to weeks. We are already seeing evidence of this in Germany and France.

I know that many of you have travel plans for spring break next week. I ask you to consider those plans carefully. The list of places requiring 14-day self-quarantine upon return will likely grow in the coming days and weeks. There is a chance that what does not require quarantine upon return when you set out on your journey may require quarantine by the time you return. A 14-day quarantine could put you a semester behind. Moreover, the decisions you make about travel during this ascendant period of Covid-19's spread will impact not just you but your families, friends, peers and Professors upon your return. To be honest with you, I'm avoiding all travel now, myself. Please consider a staycation over spring break.

We stand prepared to enact other risk prevention measures if community-acquired cases develop in South Orange County, but for now we are conducting “learning as usual” at Saddleback, save for the measures above.

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 are very afraid of contracting this virus. I can assure you that our risk level remains low. There is no reason to stay home from class or off campus out of fear, at least not at this level of risk. If that changes, I promise you that we will move to the next level of risk prevention.

There is no higher priority for me and staff and faculty of Saddleback right now than ensuring your health and safety while you are here to learn. 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 our eyes on the prize.

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

Elliot

Dr. Elliot Stern

President, Saddleback College