

COVID-19 Update: 03-16-2020

Dear Stone Academy Community,

Since my message to you on Friday, I have received a lot of questions. Many regard how Stone Academy will continue to proceed as an academic institution and an employer, yet others are looking for our opinion on COVID-19 and the local, state, and federal efforts. Today I will take time to address both topics and provide an update to last week's timeline.

A question that several staff members and myself have gotten is whether we are scared. There is little doubt that this situation is unlike one we have faced before and I can admit that there have been times where the pang of fear has left me feeling underprepared. All that can be done to move forward is to recognize that fear, and focus on what we can control. For every worried thought that we have, there is a way to address it, and that is all we can hope to control. Focus on your preventive measures, educate yourself on the disease, and talk to others about your fears. Once they are out in the open, and you know what elements you can control, you will find much needed areas of refuge and moments of solace.

Educating yourself on the disease can present its challenges, as many articles, social media posts, and news stories seem to provide conflicting information. It is because of this that we have compiled a fact sheet with links to official sources, which is available at Stone.edu/COVID-19. We will continue to add to this as more studies provide insight into the situation, so check back often.

Theory and Clinical Coursework

From an academic perspective we have begun to pursue the course of action that was outlined on Friday, March 13, 2020. Today we had our first faculty training on the Blackboard platform and look to be on target to begin resuming all theory courses on Thursday, March 19, 2020. As we begin this transition we recognize that some students may lack the basic technology, a cell phone at minimum, to participate in class. I ask you to please reach out to your Campus Director immediately so that we can assist you in addressing this issue.

In regards to clinical courses, we have several meetings set up this week with our regulators to look into the role of virtual or simulated clinical experiences. I anticipate having an update by the end of the week as to Stone Academy's course of action.

Staff on Campus

We are beginning to assess the possibility of select staff working remotely. Currently this is being addressed on a case-by-case basis, although Stone Academy remains prepared to accelerate the transition for staff to work remotely should the Governor's executive orders require it. In the meantime, our Campus Directors will be asking for insight from each member of the staff regarding their preparedness to work remotely.

Visitors on Campus

Effective March 18, 2020, Stone Academy will no longer be allowing prospective students on campus. Efforts to digitize the workflow in both financial aid and admissions are well underway and guidance will be provided directly by the Director of Enrollment and the Director of Financial Aid. This measure is being taken to continue to reduce face-to-face interactions on campus.

Vendors, students, and faculty are asked to call ahead prior to visiting the campus unless they have already been scheduled to be on campus.

I will continue to provide updates all week, so please continue to direct any questions to your Campus Director, as I will look to answer some of them in each communication.

Thank you all for your continued patience and continue to be safe.

Sincerely,
Joseph M. Bierbaum, President