

March 16, 2020

Dear Members of the Sarah Lawrence Community,

As you are aware, the understanding of, and response to, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is changing at a breakneck pace and with great urgency. Last night, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention issued new guidelines for the next eight weeks. New York City and Westchester County also announced extended closures of schools as well as the extensive closures of businesses and restaurants beginning today.

Less than a week ago, we put in place responsible measures that we hoped would allow us to meet a shared goal of return to in-person teaching later in this semester, noting that we would observe changing guidance from health and governmental authorities. Simply put, last night's developments were substantial and paradigm-shifting. Therefore, I have made the difficult decision to **suspend all on-campus, in-person learning for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester**. I am deeply saddened by this decision and know that it is heart-wrenching for all of us, but it is the only appropriate and responsible choice in light of this rapidly changing landscape.

### **What does this mean?**

- All students presently in residence on campus **must move out fully as soon as possible and no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2020**.
  - Students for whom moving off campus by this deadline would pose a documented hardship should be in contact with [Paige Crandall](#) to discuss options.
  - We realize this poses a special challenge for students who already left campus for spring break. Those who have already left campus and are unable to return to move out by Wednesday, March 18, should be in contact with [Paige Crandall](#) to arrange a time later in the semester to return to campus and retrieve their possessions.
  - A request to vacate campus on such short notice is challenging and we appreciate your assistance as we respond appropriately to these new guidelines; additional logistical information for students [may be found here](#).
  - Students for whom travel and relocation at this time poses a financial hardship may apply to the [Dean of Studies](#) for emergency financial assistance. We are grateful to alumni, families, and friends of the College for their donations to [this fund](#).
- We will share information and a policy on prorated refunds for room and board fees as soon as possible as well as further information for our student employees.
- If circumstances allow us to bring students back to campus for graduation as scheduled in mid-May, we will do so. If we are unable to hold graduation as presently scheduled, we will observe it virtually, but will also identify a future date to hold commencement on campus for the Class of 2020. We will make determination on the date of graduation later in April. I very much look forward to being reunited with the Class of 2020 on the steps of Westlands.

- The health, wellness, and safety of all of our employees is of paramount concern. We are committed to supporting our employees through this crisis and adopting appropriate policies to do so; these are being communicated separately by Danielle Coscia, AVP for Human Resources.

I am sure there are questions related to this absolute necessity to move to remote learning for the remainder of the semester that are not answered in this letter; we will continue to provide updates and details at [SLC.EDU/COVID](https://slc.edu/covid). You may also [submit questions](#) there.

**Remote learning will commence as scheduled at the end of Spring Break, on March 23.** I know that you all join me in thanking our extraordinary and dedicated faculty and staff for their commitment to our students and for the tireless work they are doing to allow us to conclude the work of this semester successfully in the face of these unforeseen challenges.

Not all will agree with every decision that we make at every point in time, but as I [shared with you just this past Friday](#), our decisions have been, and continue to be, driven by a principled focus on the health, safety, and wellness of our community; ensuring that our students are able to continue and complete the academic work of this semester; our obligations as a residential community; and supporting our employees. **As we seek to flatten the curve of the spread of COVID-19, we face a public health crisis of a type and magnitude never experienced in our lifetimes.** We know that we must take extraordinary measures if we are both to protect those on our campus and to play our individual and collective part in helping prevent the further spread of this virus. Despite the uncertainty, fear, and anxiety engendered by this crisis, and even as we will be dispersed around the globe, I know that this is a moment when we as a community will live into the College's motto of "wisdom with understanding," and experience in new ways John Dewey's oft-quoted maxim that "education is not preparation for life, education is life itself." I have the privilege of seeing day-in and day-out just how smart, passionate, creative, adaptable, and outside-the-box thinkers Sarah Lawrence people are, and that is something our world needs now more than ever.

Yours,

Cristle Collins Judd  
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