

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

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Dear Delgado Community College Faculty and Staff:

Good afternoon, because of the increased number of cases from the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in the New Orleans region, it is important that we act proactively. Since before the COVID-19 outbreak became a pandemic, we have held intensive discussions regarding the College's response to the Coronavirus to plan for our safety, instructional and business continuity, and communications. I am pleased to inform you that Delgado was the first college in our System to begin strategic discussions related to instructional and business continuity.

My message to you has been consistent: Your safety and that of our students is paramount to every decision made. I am so very proud of you and the work that we have done to date in the wake of this unprecedented pandemic. I am in total awe of the way the academic side of the house--the faculty, department chairs, program directors, academic support staff, assistant deans, and deans--have redesigned face-to-face courses to our new alternative instructional delivery modalities. I am also amazed by the way Student Affairs is working innovatively to ensure that we are ready to continue registering students for summer and fall. To the housekeeping staff who are working diligently to disinfect: You are greatly appreciated. To Campus Police who are patrolling our campuses and sites to keep us safe: You are immensely appreciated. To each and every member of our Delgado community: All of you have stepped up in ways that are unimaginable. I have said it many times that the faculty and staff at Delgado are the best in higher education, and your actions in the wake of this pandemic have absolutely demonstrated this.

I know that that with the K-12 schools' closure and the health risks associated with COVID-19 for those who may have health concerns, or a loved one with health challenges, our new reality is a lot to navigate. I, too, have a loved one whose safety is my responsibility, and I have children who must now home school. The home schooling is interesting in and of itself and completely out of my comfort zone. These are, to say the least, very interesting times. I share this information about myself to let you know that we are in this together. With that, I have asked that supervisors be understanding as these are indeed challenging times, but out of our challenges we will emerge victorious. Just as we must navigate our new reality, so do our students. Many of them have children who must now be home schooled. Many are not able to bring their children to grandparents because those grandparents are the ones that may be most vulnerable to this disease. Many are dealing with employment issues because of closures and limited hours. So, with all these additional challenges, our students are concerned about classes and

whether or not they are able to complete this semester. Well, because of each and every one of you and the extraordinary work you have done, this is one concern they do not need to have. My plan is to send them a video to ease their concern and inform them of the steps taken by the College to ensure their academic success.

This is where we currently are and what I want you to know:

- Monday, March 16 and Tuesday, March 17 were emergency days. This time was for you to take care of yourself and get your life in better order.
- Wednesday, March 18 through Friday, March 20 are planning days. This is when you must prepare for the start of our alternative instructional delivery.
- Monday, March 23 is the day when face-to-face instruction changes to alternative modalities.

It is important to note that midterm exams were scheduled for Monday, March 16. However, given our closure midterm grading has been pushed back until this Friday, May 20. Faculty, please reach out to your students and provide guidance to them related to what the next few weeks will entail. We have not significantly changed the academic calendar, as I fully intend for us to remain on schedule. However, I do recognize that these are challenging times and flexibility is the key. If changes should occur, you will be notified.

Because there is a digital divide and some of our students do not have access to computers as well as other needed equipment, and because New Orleans Public Libraries are closed, we have decided to keep computer labs, tutoring labs, and libraries open, with stringent restrictions on the number of persons served at the same time and location, as well as sanitizing and cleaning between patron use of the area and equipment. Also, under the recommendation of Governor John Bel Edwards and Mayor LaToya Cantrell, we are practicing social distancing and limiting group sizes to 10 or fewer with a distance of at least six feet apart.

My expectation, and I have addressed this with my direct reports, is that supervisors, deans, and department chairs will provide maximum flexibility to employees as we all navigate our new COVID-19 reality. This flexibility means allowing those who need to work from home or remotely so that they can manage personal, family, and health needs. Just as our students need flexibility and understanding, so do our employees.

Also, we have kept the Joey Georgusis Center for Children open as long as we could, as the governor requested. However, on Friday, March 20 the Center will close and parents have been notified.

I know that at some point, following what other states and cities have done out of an abundance of caution, I am anticipating a shelter-in-place order. When that occurs, the College is ready to remain fully operational. We have put protocols in place to maintain instructional as well as business continuity. Although we may not be able to go to work physically, the operations of the College will continue. Delgado Community College will not be closed for business.

I feel it imperative to address the major concern and that is layoffs. I have absolutely no intention of laying off anyone. The work you have done in the midst of this pandemic has been

stellar. We have to complete this semester and you will see advertising and recruiting messages to students to enroll in summer and fall classes. This will be an aggressive push, and I need your help on this. Today's spring semester enrollment is 13,546, which is 2.9% above last year's 13,163. These students are taking 123,141 credit hours which is up 8.6% from last year. As it relates to spring minimesters, as of today we have 441 students who are enrolled only in Minimester classes. This is up compared to last spring when we had 406. We have done great considering this crisis, and I have no doubt that we will finish strong!

Faculty, you may have students who will want to withdraw. Please, please, please discourage them. Withdrawing will have tremendous repercussions on their financial aid and will hurt them in the end. The way to go with this is an "I" (Incomplete) Contract, which would provide more time for the student to complete any missed work. Additionally, federal student workers will not be asked to report to work during the Coronavirus Disease outbreak. However, the Department of Education will allow Delgado Community College to continue to compensate federal work-study students with their regular pay throughout the spring semester. Federal work-study students will have to remain enrolled for spring semester in a minimum of six credit hours to maintain eligibility for the program.

I have covered a lot in this message, and I hope I have eased your minds to some extent. We are in a great place and it is because of each one of you. I am so very proud of you, and I am blessed to be your Chancellor. Delgado has faced many difficult times and with every one of them, we have emerged successful. We have a way of turning challenges into opportunities and into success stories. COVID-19 will be no different. We will use what we are learning from this opportunity to innovate with a focus on the future. Our students are depending on us and we will not let them down. Thank you so much for your unwavering commitment to Delgado Community College. You are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Larissa Littleton-Steib
Chancellor