Dear Members of the McMaster community,

These are unsettling times. The spread of COVID-19 around the world and its arrival in our own region has brought McMaster and all other organizations to unchartered territory. As of today, the risk of catching the virus continues to remain low. The University’s focus is always clearly on our students, faculty and staff. And while the University has taken many measures to prepare and keep our community informed as the pandemic has unfolded, it is now time to take a more significant decision to suspend classes at McMaster.

**McMaster in-person classes for undergraduate and graduate students will end at the end of day Friday March 13th and no in-person exams will be held at the end of this term.**

Faculty members and instructors are asked to work with their Chairs, Directors and Deans to be prepared to communicate with students by Wednesday, March 18th to let them know how the remainder of their courses will be managed and grades assessed so that they can complete their credits within the normal timeframe of the winter term. These solutions will vary from course to course.

Ensuring students finish their year, that those in their final year are able to graduate and reducing the stress students are under must be of paramount importance. This is a stressful time for everyone. And these are difficult decisions.

We don’t underestimate the challenge it will be for instructors to find alternate ways to finish their course programs and for staff to develop and implement the changes that will be required. But I am confident that in these extraordinary times, extraordinary solutions will be found and the University will provide the support needed to help ensure that happens.

While this transition to on-line and other types of solutions occurs, the remainder of the University will remain open. The overall number of people on campus will be reduced, but students will continue to have access to their residences, libraries will be available and our research enterprise, services (including food services), and offices will continue to function.

The University’s Crisis Management Team, which includes academic leaders and others from across McMaster, will continue to lead the University’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is more important than ever that you stay informed. The University shares all of its information on the Daily News and McMaster’s dedicated COVID-19 website and through its social media channels. Departments and units are also sharing information specific to their areas. It is important that students, faculty and staff continue to share information and work together as the situation around COVID-19 continues to develop at an increasingly fast pace.

All discretionary events were cancelled as of Thursday, March 12th and we strongly encourage everyone at the University to avoid travel outside of Canada.

It is also incredibly important that together we ensure that McMaster continues to be an inclusive and safe University that respects all members of our community.

I want to thank all of you – staff students and faculty – for your commitment, your patience and your determination to strengthen the University as together we face the challenges before us.

Sincerely,

David Farrar

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