

Members of the Rutgers Community:

I want to take this opportunity to update you regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, commonly referred to as “Coronavirus,” to let you know of the steps we have taken, and to offer some thoughts about things you may do to reduce your personal health risk.

I know that people are concerned about the virus, as well they should be. This is a significant public health matter that must be taken seriously. There are, however, steps that individuals can take to minimize their exposure and there are steps that the University is taking to help assure the health of the members of our community.

We are closely monitoring the situation, are in regular contact with state and federal health agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and the New Jersey Department of Health, and have been sharing our experiences and learning from those of our peer institutions in the Big Ten, the Association of American Universities, and similar organizations.

We have mobilized a task force of senior leaders involved in every aspect of University operations to respond to urgent and evolving challenges presented by COVID-19. Our preparations have been ongoing since COVID-19 first presented and have involved tracking the virus, making plans for its likely spread, and working with our foreign national students and other students traveling abroad. It is our obligation and responsibility to plan appropriately and in a coordinated and orderly fashion. We are striving to meet that obligation.

There are currently no reported cases of COVID-19 involving Rutgers students, faculty, or staff, and there are no reported cases in New Jersey. That situation, as we all know, could change at any time.

### **Important Information Regarding Study Abroad Programs and Other Foreign Travel**

In keeping with guidance by the CDC, today we made the decision to cancel Rutgers-sponsored study abroad semester programs, international spring break programs, and Rutgers faculty-sponsored study abroad programs. We also recommend that Rutgers faculty and staff curtail Rutgers-sponsored international travel, particularly to those areas identified by the CDC as areas in which COVID-19 has been identified.

We recommend to students in partner university or other third-party programs to consider ending participation in those programs and returning home as soon as practical. While we are making this strong recommendation, please know that the final decision on participation in those programs is up to the affected students and their families.

We are working to address any academic issues that arise for the 200 students currently involved in international study abroad programs.

We will announce a decision regarding study abroad programs currently planned for the summer and for next semester in the coming weeks, certainly before the April 1 deadline for enrollment in those programs.

### **Taking Care of Your Health**

There are numerous steps that you can take, personally, to protect yourself. I strongly urge you to follow the [guidance of the CDC](#) and of [our own experts](#) if you have any concern about your own health.

During these challenging times we also need to be sensitive and respectful in supporting other members of our community. Stereotyping others because of their ethnicity is not only unlawful but also a violation of University policy and goes against our values as an inclusive community. Please know that your health and well-being is our highest concern, and we will keep you informed as developments evolve.

Sincerely,

Robert Barchi