

Chancellor message to campus. 8.23.2020

Distribution through ECU Official to Faculty, Staff, Students

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Title of ECU Official: ECU adjusting fall semester because of COVID-19

To the ECU Community:

Throughout the summer, we planned and prepared our campus for the Return of Pirate Nation, and more than two weeks ago, we welcomed Pirates back to campus. We've completed two weeks of classes in our first eight-week block for the fall semester. However, during the last week we have experienced a rapid acceleration of COVID-19 cases, including multiple clusters.

For this reason, University leadership has worked with UNC System President Peter Hans to determine what is best for the health and safety of our Pirates moving forward. We are appreciative of the ongoing support and approval of our plan by President Hans to move our undergraduate classes to online instruction beginning Wednesday, Aug. 26. Please read this message in full for additional details.

This decision to move online for the fall semester was not taken lightly. After all, we achieve our mission — student and regional success — at much higher levels when we can operate in person, with the face-to-face environment providing engagement that we know is critical to our students.

I am grateful for the health care providers at Student Health Services who are testing and caring for our students.

We owe much gratitude to our staff and faculty who tirelessly worked on the return to campus plan — developing and rolling it out, from building hand sanitizing stands to adapting to teaching with masks and social distancing.

We also owe thanks to those Pirates who actively protected one another by following the safety protocol — three Ws and the gathering guidelines. We sincerely thank you for your care, your thoughtfulness and your efforts.

To these Pirates, I too am deeply disappointed. With thousands of students returning to campus, we expected cases but we've unfortunately seen a greater spike than anticipated.

To best protect the health and safety of the campus community, we have made the difficult decisions to implement the following changes to campus operations:

- Undergraduate courses will move to online Wednesday, Aug. 26. Undergraduate classes are suspended Monday, Aug. 24 and Tuesday, Aug. 25. Faculty should follow the guidance provided in the [Interim Regulation on Making Up Missed Instructional Time Due to Suspension of Instruction](#). According to the regulation, individual faculty will determine how the subject matter will be covered and how the students will satisfy the requirements (much like our experiences under this regulation with weather events).

- The university will extend the deadline for withdrawal from academic courses without financial penalty for the first 8-week block of classes to 5 p.m. Friday, Aug. 28. The last day for withdrawal without financial penalty for 15-week courses remains Sept. 4.
- Professional and graduate courses will continue as they are currently operating.
- For students residing in on-campus housing, Student Affairs will send you information today that details the plans for prorated Housing and Dining refunds and for residence hall move-out.
- For students in experiential learning courses, fall semester plans include the process that allows those programs to continue.

ECU must show compassion for students and their need to return home. Many students may begin moving out of the residence halls as early as Monday, August 24. Therefore, we ask faculty to be flexible during the move-out period, which will extend to August 30.

I realize that for some this news is not what you wanted or expected for your fall semester. Whether or not you welcome this change, I know these are difficult times for all, and we have resources ready to help you. The Counseling Center, 252-328-6661, is available for virtual appointments; Student Health Services is available at 252-328-6841 and gotquestions@ecu.edu; and the [Dean of Students Office](#) is available at 252-328-9297. The Call Center, 252-737-5100, will be open starting Monday, Aug. 24, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will operate until Aug. 28.

It's critical now more than ever that we — and let me be clear, I mean all of us ... administration, faculty, staff, students — come together, even while many of us are apart, to tackle yet another challenge this pandemic has brought. Let's do it with the grit and determination that I know we Pirates possess, and let's do it with patience and kindness for one another.

Interim Chancellor Ron Mitchelson