
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

January 24, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I am sure you are aware that Federal, state, and local health officials are closely monitoring an outbreak of a new strain of coronavirus, called 2019-nCoV. This strain is spreading quickly across areas of China, with a few cases identified in neighboring countries. While there are currently no confirmed cases of 2019-nCoV on the east coast, there are two confirmed cases in the United States—one in Washington State and another in Illinois.

Coronaviruses cause respiratory illness and trigger flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, difficulty breathing, etc.). The 2019-nCoV has been associated with severe infections, hospitalizations, and deaths. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers this to be a serious public health concern, based on current information, the immediate health risk to USM institutions is considered low at this time. But we want to be mindful and alert as students resume classes.

Despite the low health risk, we are providing the following information from the CDC to ensure the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff.

If individuals have traveled to China in the last 14 days and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, they should seek medical care right away from a healthcare provider. Individuals are strongly encouraged to call ahead to inform healthcare providers of symptoms and recent travel history. Contact with others should be avoided until a healthcare provider has provided an evaluation.

If you visited China prior to Dec. 1, 2019, there is no risk that you have been exposed to this strain of coronavirus.

Meanwhile, there is widespread influenza activity in the region. Getting a flu shot is the most effective way to prevent the spread of flu. You can prevent the spread of many illnesses by covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, washing your hands often, and staying home when you feel sick.

Our office is working with a virologist within the USM who specializes in this area, and we will keep you informed of any critical updates on the spread of this virus. Please contact Vice Chancellor Joanne Boughman at jboughman@usmd.edu with questions or concerns related to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jay A. Perman
Chancellor