



**San Diego Community College District
Office of the Chancellor**

April 1, 2020

CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19: UPDATE #6

To: SDCCD Colleagues and Friends

From: Constance M. Carroll, Chancellor

Hello to everyone. It's Spring Break this week, but I am still working from home every day, as I am sure many of you are as well. I do hope that members of our faculty, classified professionals, and administrators are able to take some time off. It is so important to balance work time with personal time, even though there are limitations on what one can do. As always, thank you for your flexibility and resilience as we work through the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The members of our Board of Trustees extend their appreciation for everyone's willingness to put students first during this challenging time.

In general, things seem to be progressing as well as can be expected in the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD). Enrollment is stable and on track, despite the spring semester disruption by transitioning to online instruction. The overall transition to remote instruction and operations has also gone well, and everyone seems to be mastering the art of meetings via Zoom. Over 850 high school students have already applied to the San Diego Promise program in the fall semester, indicating their optimism about the future educational opportunities we offer. To my knowledge, no COVID-19 cases have been reported among members of our faculty, classified professionals, or administrators. We have much for which to be thankful.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ONLINE/ DISTANCE EDUCATION

As you know, there are multiple avenues and sites to support faculty and students during this transition to online education. I will not reprint them in this message since I know that these opportunities are being conveyed by other sources. We are still working with the State on how best to handle the laboratory and clinical demands of some of our programs. I will add that we are involved in an extensive effort to obtain laptops with Internet connectivity for our students. City, Mesa, and Miramar colleges, and Continuing Education have already distributed hundreds of laptops to students, with the assistance of their

foundations. Our San Diego Promise program is continuing its fundraising campaign and I am coordinating a fundraising effort for our San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges Association (SDICCCA) colleges in the region to see if we can obtain funding from a major foundation. One of the worst possible outcomes of the COVID-19 crisis is the widening of the “digital divide” because disadvantaged students cannot afford to participate in the world of online instruction, since they do not possess computer equipment or Internet connectivity. We cannot let that happen.

MAJOR FUTURE PLANNING ISSUE

While stabilizing instructional delivery and adjusting to the new formats required by the COVID-19 situation, there is another issue looming before all institutions of higher education, especially community colleges. As we all know, the relationship between the economy and student enrollment is countercyclical. When the economy is weak, student enrollments are high, as people turn to community colleges for job training or retraining; when the economy is strong, student enrollments drop, as people become employed instead of taking classes. It is now projected that the economy will continue to slump and national unemployment may climb as high as 32%. Thus, we will need a strategy for accommodating increasing numbers of students in the coming fall or spring, no matter what the instructional modality may be. This is something we should discuss very soon so that we are prepared for another change in the enrollment pattern.

COMMENCEMENTS POSTPONED

After waiting as long as we could, the campus presidents and I have reached a decision regarding commencements. The City, Mesa, Miramar, and Continuing Education commencements, which were scheduled to take place in late May and early June, are being postponed due to the prohibition against large group assemblies and due to the need for us to give timely notice to the vendors who provide the academic regalia and other items for these events. The commencements will be postponed to summer or fall, or they may even be recast in a digital format, all depending upon the evolutions of the COVID-19 situation. This was a very difficult decision, which we made most reluctantly, because commencements are extremely important to our students and their families since they celebrate years of academic commitment and personal sacrifice in pursuit of a better life. Lots of students have been contacting us, both inquiring about the commencements and urging us not to cancel them. Unfortunately, concerns about health and safety must prevail. All graduating students will be notified today regarding this decision. We are deeply sorry to disappoint them.

EARLY SCHOLARSHIPS

Recognizing that some students have lost their jobs and have urgent financial needs, we are exploring with scholarship donors the possibility of distributing scholarships early, preferably during the week of April 13. Since the scholarship awards luncheons and dinners have all been canceled, the goal would be to provide these funds to students as soon as possible. Mesa College initiated this idea and the other institutions felt it would be a good thing to do for our students.

FUNDING

As I am sure you can imagine, despite budget constraints this year, the San Diego Community College District has joined other colleges and universities in dramatically increasing expenditures in order to cope with the COVID-19 crisis. It has already cost the SDCCD millions of dollars in transitioning classes to the online/distance education format and in transitioning all administrative and support operations to remote locations, with almost 100% of employees working from home. These expenditures will definitely increase, even though projections are that next year's State budget for community colleges will be even more constrained than the current budget. To take advantage of reimbursement possibilities, the SDCCD has reactivated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and we are tracking all expenditures related to the COVID-19 situation so that we will be able to qualify for reimbursement by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). We are also closely monitoring all State and foundation grants in a search for support.

In addition, we are closely monitoring federal relief funding. The Cabinet and I are reviewing the federal Corona Virus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which was passed by Congress on March 25 and 27 (S. 3548 and H.R. 748), and signed by the President. The bill addresses all aspects of necessary relief and establishes a Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, which includes \$13.9 billion in "flexible funding" to help institutions defray expenses and impacts such as "lost revenue, technology costs associated with a transition to distance education, and grants to students for food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care." The funding levels for colleges and universities are indexed to Pell grant levels. The Act further specifies that these funds must be used (50%) for direct emergency aid to students, "including grants to students for food, housing, course materials, technology, healthcare, and child care." We are studying the bill to determine what our flexibility is in this funding mechanism, including how Continuing Education and District functions should be addressed. Based on Pell levels, the following distribution authorizations would occur:

• City College	\$4,974,000
• Mesa College	\$6,379,000
• Miramar College	\$3,266,000
Total District	\$14,619,000

Even with welcome relief funding from these and other sources, the financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis is enormous and the entire higher education community is in for somewhat of a "rough ride" regarding budgets.

ERGONOMIC EQUIPMENT

A reminder from Human Resources: Working at home is challenging in many ways, including physical support. As we all learn how to work from home more effectively, it is important to be good to our bodies by observing basic rules of ergonomics to the greatest extent possible. The District's Risk Management department has recently provided important [guidance regarding ergonomic safety](#) while working from home, which can be [accessed online](#). The ergonomic guidance document contains links to useful resources for ergonomic health and safety that are available to all employees. Please be observant regarding your physical needs and take frequent breaks to stretch. Risk Management has published a [guide to proper stretching](#) at the desk or computer. Everyone is encouraged to

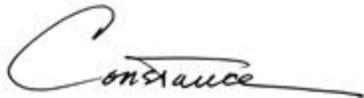
make use of these helpful resources and techniques. If you need additional assistance with ergonomics at home, please contact your supervisor – your supervisor may be able to assist you in borrowing lightweight items from your workplace, such as ergonomic keyboards, ergonomic mice, and even your desk chair if it can be transported safely.

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

As part of the transition away from in-person and group interaction, the SDCCD Board of Trustees will also be moving their required public meetings to a virtual format. Effective with the April 9 Board meeting, Board meetings will be held using Zoom videoconferencing, with the public invited to participate via a YouTube live-stream. SDCCD Board members, the Chancellor, Cabinet members, and governance leaders will participate in the Board meeting from their homes. Individuals who wish to provide public comment may do so via email or online formats. Additional information and details about the new Board meeting format will be provided this Thursday, April 2, when the Board agenda is published.

Let me close by thanking you again for your dedication and flexibility during this crisis. Also thank you for the helpful suggestions that you have been making. The San Diego region is truly fortunate to have such caring professionals and community supporters.

Stay well.



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