Dear Colleagues:

As you are aware, the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) is generating concern and uncertainty. There are currently no confirmed cases of coronavirus in the Capital Region, although there is a growing number of cases in New York State. The University at Albany is committed to protecting the health and safety of our campus community while also ensuring, to the extent possible, academic continuity for our students. In light of this rapidly evolving public health situation, we must prepare for multiple scenarios that may occur with little or no notice – ranging from a high level of absenteeism to a full closure. We are coordinating with the Governor's Office and SUNY System Administration, in compliance with directives from state and local health departments.

The campus has taken the following actions to date:

- Implemented a COVID-19 task force in late-January that has been addressing related academic, student affairs, and facilities concerns;
- Added a callout to the top of the University's main webpage that links to the COVID-19 information page;
- Recalled our study abroad students from China, Italy, South Korea, and Japan;
- Restricted travel for faculty, staff and students to these areas (in addition to Iran);
- Implemented a mandatory self-isolation requirement for all individuals who took personal travel to the abovementioned affected areas;
- Increased the frequency of cleaning high-touch campus surfaces in alignment with New York State Department of Health guidance;
- Held a town hall discussion on the coronavirus on Wednesday in the Campus Center (available here); and
- Emailed the campus community on Monday regarding the coronavirus (available here), and will send another email this coming Monday to students recommending that they bring their
academic materials with them on spring break in the unlikely event they are unable to temporarily return to campus.

While the University is not implementing telework or distance education at this time, we are engaged in planning exercises for this possibility. With regard to instruction, we ask all faculty to consider how they could best adapt their courses to deliver instruction if face-to-face interaction is not an option. Details on campus resources for assisting you in adapting your courses are identified on the faculty/staff section of the information page, which will be regularly updated. As you develop your plan, please communicate this information to your department chair or dean.

In this situation, we ask faculty and staff to be sensitive to our students’ unique personal situations. To help with this, keep in mind the following guidelines on how best to respond to student illness or necessary absences:

- To limit the spread of all communicable disease, the University encourages students and employees to stay home when they are sick or have been advised to self-isolate. I ask you to be lenient with students who miss class due to illness.

- Faculty can urge students to remain out of class when they are sick, but may not compel students to do so. Faculty should support students by providing academic accommodations to those who miss class due to illness.

If you have specific health questions, visit the University’s COVID-19 Information Page or call the Albany County Department of Health at (518) 447-4640.

My office will keep you informed of developments. As we receive questions, we will develop the information page. This situation remains very fluid, and I ask all of us to be flexible and to treat each other with kindness.

Sincerely,

Carol Kim
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs