COVID-19 FAQs – with OSU Extension Information

Main point—we are talking about plans for the next few weeks.

Our primary concern remains the health and safety of all our people. Please make decisions that ensure the health and well-being of everyone.

Does this just apply to the Columbus campus?
The message from the President applies to all three of our campuses—Columbus, Wooster, and Statewide.

Who should respond to media inquiries?
It is fine to respond about questions if an event will or will not be held, but any questions related to the university’s response to COVID-19 and all other media inquiries should be directed to Ben Johnson, The Ohio State University director of media and public relations, johnson.7149@osu.edu, 614-292-9681.

BE CAREFUL ONLINE
We are hearing that there is an uptick in phishing and hacking attempts. Several institutions have been compromised in the past few days due to employees clicking on these messages. Please be vigilant about that potential, and be cautious online.

Should my meeting or event be cancelled?
Leadership should work within their unit or department to determine for each event whether it is essential or if it can be delayed, held virtually, or cancelled with the health and safety of participants as our primary concern. Principles to consider as you try to determine whether to hold an event or meeting should focus on its importance to our mission, whether it will engage people from a variety of locations in enclosed areas or close proximity, and whether it includes high-risk participants and other factors.

Guidance is not based solely on the size of the event; social interaction should also be considered. It only takes one individual to compromise a group, so the university is recommending virtual meetings or delaying meetings for the next couple of weeks.

Please note: The amount of planning that has gone into an event or activity is NOT a determinant of whether that event is critical to our mission. The health of our volunteers, 4-H members, employees, stakeholders, and others is of utmost importance, so this directive also impacts our 4-H club meetings, camp counselor training, junior fair board meetings, advisory committees, field days, community meet and greets, recognition events, etc.
Decisions about whether to hold a specific, *previously-planned* Extension-led activity should be made on a case-by-case basis in coordination with your direct supervisor and/or area leader. At this time, new Extension-led activities should not be planned until after March 30.

What about work with other organizations? For Extension activities that already have been planned in conjunction with other organizations, it is important to make a decision with that organization. Please note: some activities may be cancelled by the other parties involved, and you’ll need to follow up accordingly.

For other entities who are hosting an activity, if they continue to hold it, our employees can attend – based on the employee’s comfort level with attending in midst of this health concern.

When certain deliverables are associated with a grant, please reach out to the grant funder(s) about how best to proceed during the next two to three weeks. For community nutrition work, as of March 10, please be patient. Pat Bebo is contacting our grant partners about funding and directives, next steps, etc.

**Is there any guidance on if faculty/staff should continue committee meetings?**
This needs to be determined locally as to whether people should come together. Regarding health and safety, it only takes one individual to compromise a group, so it is recommended to hold virtual meetings or delaying for the next couple of weeks. Small groups who are willing to come together are within the discretion of you at the departmental level or within your county.

**Several faculty searches and external review falls within this timeframe and involves people from outside Ohio State, what do we do?**

*Is it essential to getting the work done in the next couple of weeks? If yes, figure out virtual alternatives. If it can be delayed, please do that.* We’ll all need to be flexible with timelines because they will be changing. Just do the best you can and keep focus on the health and safety of those involved.

As of March 10, Extension Administration has determined that the ANR and FCS program review external review committee meetings scheduled for March 16-17 on campus will be postponed.

**Welcome to Columbus Program – what’s the status?**
Regional deans will convene tomorrow and relay information after they meet.
TRAVEL

International travel has been suspended. Domestic travel (out of state) should be reduced to essential travel, approved on a case-by-case basis. This includes new travel as well as any currently booked trips between now and April 20. This primarily applies to air travel; however, we recommend supervisors evaluate travel by any means and assess whether it is essential or can be delayed. For in-state travel, we recommend a case-by-case assessment of the purpose of the travel and whether the event/meeting can be managed virtually. If doing field work, this can continue. For travel being planned for after April 20, we will know more in the next few days to provide guidance for future plans.

Student recruitment travel, visits, etc. – what do we do?
Student Life is taking this up this afternoon to provide more guidance. There will likely be a delay for the student visits. Not sure yet about our recruitment travel. More to come.

Advice on domestic visitors scheduled on campus?
Same response If in-state or out-of-state; if can be delayed or held virtually it would be recommended. If it must be held, it should really be mission critical, at least for the next few weeks.

Reimbursement of cancellation fees for travel already booked and paid for?
Some central resources may be available for this.

OSU Extension is aware that several national organizations have cancelled their conferences (e.g. National 4-H Conference has been rescheduled to this fall). If a domestic conference that you plan to attend in the upcoming weeks has not been cancelled, please confirm with your supervisor that it is absolutely necessary for you to travel to the conference.

Self-quarantine: While only those who have traveled to Level 3 countries are required by the university to be quarantined upon their return, it might be wise for those who have visited other countries for personal travel to self-quarantine for a few days to be safe.
STAFF AND SUPPORT UNITS
Assisting with this effort is the highest priority for all support units and staff and I’m asking that all of you should refocus your efforts in the next few weeks to support the rest of our college as we address the situation. We will continue to pay staff, student employees, and others even if they are unable to be present or conduct work as usual. **We will have guidance for Office Associates and other staff who are not officially approved for telecommuting.**

TELECOMMUTING
We encourage you to plan for telecommuting as much as possible in the next few weeks. We will provide additional guidance for those who are essential employees – meaning that they must be physically present whether on our farms, to keep offices open, or monitor labs, etc.

**Guidance on keeping departmental/college offices open?**
Work within your unit/department to determine what options are – **we will hopefully have more information from HR tomorrow. Will assess offices to ensure we can meet mission critical needs.**

**Should we be encouraging people to stay home and telecommute or is it up to them?**
Let people decide, we are encouraging them to telecommute. If they are not planning to do so, they should still be thinking about a plan if they absolutely had to telecommute.

**If I can’t work, will I be paid?**
We will continue to pay staff, student employees, and others even if they are unable to be present or conduct work as usual.

**Student workers calling concerned about income, will they be allowed to work.**
Not sure if they will work but will be paid. Reassure them to not be overly concerned and that we are aware of their situation and are working on arrangements for it.

**NOTE:** About 50% of CFAES employees have laptops. We may ask each area for additional info on capacity needed for portable devices. OCIO has both iPads and laptops to assist us as we move through the next few days. **Be thinking about who might need a laptop loaner for those with desktop computers.**
COURSES AND INSTRUCTION

As you plan for the next few weeks, you are not being asked to create full online courses but strategies to ensure continuity of teaching for a few weeks as we address this situation.

All face-to-face instruction in classroom settings has been suspended and is to move to virtual instruction, effective immediately and through at least March 30. For students who can travel, it is up to students to determine if they wish to return to our campuses or stay at an alternate location.

Action Needed: All faculty should make it a priority to Utilize CarmenCanvas for all courses so that resources are available electronically. At minimum, Carmen should include:

a. The syllabus
b. Course materials, including presentations, videos, links and assignments
c. The grade book

Prepare alternate means of teaching to meet the learning objectives of your course(s) for the next few weeks. To help minimize the disruption to the degree possible, the university has launched keepteaching.osu.edu to share strategies and tools that faculty can use for alternate modes of delivery. In addition to the keepteaching.osu.edu website, the Office of Distance Education help desk can offer guidance. Additional information about methods will be shared.

Labs, Practica, and Internships – will all be handled on a case-by-case basis with additional guidance forthcoming. Some can continue, however, if a student is unsure about continuing we can work with them individually.

Labs are a case-by-case basis, is there someone we should follow-up with centrally?
Yes, and it will likely be Dean Kress and Associate Dean Kitchel. Dr. Kitchel will reach out to talk through specific situations with TIU heads once more guidance is provided from HR.

Will Zoom system hold up on Monday when students come back?
Zoom is not the only option for alternative instruction. They do need to be within the protocols for FERPA, etc. though.

ODEE and OCIO have increased support to ~30 staff who are prepared to respond to Carmen and Zoom questions. Zoom is actively monitoring capacity and will scale up using Amazon web services to meet our demands, if needed.
STUDENTS
The Provost announced that summer international experiences are cancelled. There will be additional guidance provided in the coming days regarding students and these topics: Connectivity, Support, Managing Stress, and Advising.

As we are entering advising season, would we encourage our students to meet over Zoom?
Not yet sure – if they have an appointment in the next week or so, yes that could work. Beyond that we’re waiting on further guidance.

Student employees relied upon heavily for keeping animal operations going. Same for greenhouse support.
Wait for additional information, may be able to continue, we will share more as we learn it. If you have more specific examples, etc. please feel free to share. HR has compiled a list of mission critical things but if you think we may be missing some please send those to us. We will also address when Dr. Kitchel visits with TIU Heads.

GRADUATE STUDENTS
Graduate associates can keep working in labs, and to assist getting materials online; to review materials that may need to be altered given online components, etc. Graduate associates will continue to be paid.

Graduate student defenses can be held in the next few weeks. Should a student not be able to come to campus (self-quarantine, illness) we will be flexible and assist with planning an examination that both verifies the identity of the student and maintains the integrity of the examination process. For example, if video is used, this is relatively easy to comply as the student can be seen by the examination committee and either a proctor or a scan view of the environment will be expected to ensure no one is in the room assisting the student (unless prior approved as a proctor), the student doesn’t have assisting materials that were not permitted, or another person is providing prompting. For these examples of the student not being able to be on campus for the examination, please have the person in charge of the examination (advisor, a coordinator or other administrative graduate personnel) contact Tim Watson (Director of Graduation Services) to be sure these requirements are appropriately met. For other “virtual” methods, such as interactive on-line (no video) etc., please direct the person responsible for setting up the examination to contact Tim Watson to move it forward.
EXTENSION and OUTREACH

Cuyahoga County – At this time, because three cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed and others are in quarantine in Cuyahoga County, our Extension office will begin following the university protocol as announced. Cuyahoga County staff are reporting to work as usual but may begin telecommuting soon.

When MGVs or volunteers are invited to attend gatherings that are not sponsored by Ohio State, should they attend on Ohio State’s behalf?
   a. If yes, then we need to be circumspect as to if we expect this in the next few weeks. If we wouldn’t send staff, then sending volunteers seems out of line.
   b. If they choose to attend individually, that is their choice.

In the immediate term how should staff proceed with events that involve food tastings?
   a. First, is the event something that needs to be held in the next few weeks or could it be delayed?
   b. If it’s determined to be essential to be held in the next few weeks, then following recommendations for hygiene from CDC would be critical.

What precautions should staff take when conducting programs with the senior population?
   a. They should consult with the senior residence if it’s at a facility. If it’s somewhere else, or hosted by us, for the next few weeks, it would be best to hold it virtually or delay.

How should 4-H events be handled?
   a. Much like courses, for the next few weeks, please transition to a virtual meeting or delay.
   b. If it must be held, can it be managed via gatherings of smaller groups?

Please note: The state 4-H office is compiling a list of 4-H specific FAQs to be shared ASAP.

If we’re not having our students going international, then we wouldn’t have 4-H participants go international for summer experiences?
Yes.

For other groups (not Ohio State) who use our facilities and hold meetings at our location, can they be held?
Affiliate groups meetings – if groups have booked a facility (such as the 4-H Center), it is their choice if they want to continue using the facility for their events. We may want to consider not penalizing groups for late cancellations, if there is a fee, etc.
Will we have some common language to put on our websites?
Yes, communications team will begin crafting messages and talking points that will be shared more broadly. We will follow the lead from University communications and marketing.

In terms of social media messages, you can continue your “content” posts as planned; please be mindful of your tone and content before publishing. Please do not post information on county social media accounts about the COVID-19 outbreak as a whole; those messages will be handled by the university, college, and Extension Administration as necessary.

CURRENT EXTENSION-SPECIFIC EVENTS – STATUS UPDATE (as we are aware to-date)

O.N.E. onboarding series – will now be moved entirely to an online course. More information will be sent directly to the series participants and session leaders.

Ohio 4-H Conference – will be cancelled for March 14. The state 4-H office has contacted 4-H professionals, 4-H members and families, and conference attendees. Specific questions should be directed to Kirk Bloir; he will connect with University Communications if necessary.

State Farm College – will be cancelled for March 14. The state ANR office is connecting with those who have planned the conference. Information will be shared directly with the registered attendees.

Pesticide Applicator Training – training sessions planned for the week of March 9-13 will be held as mission-critical and an immediate need. ODA pesticide license exams have been cancelled at this time; and we are in conversation with ODA about the March 31 deadline and all pesticide/fertilizer applicator recertification trainings scheduled after March 13.

Southwest Ohio Beekeepers School – will be cancelled for March 28. Information will be shared with registered attendees.

Ohio State Junior Swine Day – this event has now been cancelled by ODA.

RESOURCES
Teaching resources and links - keepteaching.osu.edu Office of Distance Education help desk
Office of Research information - https://research.osu.edu/news-events/coronavirus-and-your-research-program/
OSU Office of Research - https://research.osu.edu/news-events/coronavirus-and-your-research-program/

Employees—don’t forget about your EAP resources at: https://osuhealthplan.com/eap