

From: [Office of the Provost](#)
To: [All KU Lawrence and Edwards Students](#); [KU Lawrence All Staff, Faculty and Affiliates](#)
Subject: Notice for Lawrence and Edwards Campus
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A message from Chancellor Douglas A. Girod and Provost Barbara A. Bichelmeyer

Notice for Lawrence and Edwards Campus

Summary:

- *Commencement will be postponed until late summer or early fall.*
- *A strategic hiring-freeze and salary increase freeze will help the university prepare for recovery.*
- *Business travel in Kansas and Missouri is discontinued.*
- *Summer semester courses will be presented in an online format.*
- *A team of staff are working on plans to offer redress for certain services such as housing, parking and dining.*
- *Issues surrounding finals are still being reviewed.*
- *Please take all health and wellness recommendations seriously. It matters to all of us.*

Students, staff and faculty,

We hope you'll join us later today for an online [University Update](#), during which we will discuss the issues, circumstances and opportunities facing the University of Kansas Lawrence and Edwards campuses. We have a lot to share and hope you will make time to join us. The program will be recorded if you aren't able to watch the livestream.

In the meantime, we want to first respond to some questions and issues you've shared with us and introduce some new considerations for our institution.

Commencement

Based on projections for the COVID-19 pandemic as well as student input, we have decided to postpone our 2020 Commencement. The timing of our ceremony – which had been scheduled for May 17 – is uncertain enough that it would be imprudent to bring together thousands of friends and family members in close proximity. There will be no in-person, Commencement-related activities in May on the Lawrence and Edwards campuses.

Students who meet graduation requirements will still have their degrees certified. The only thing that will be delayed is the ceremony – our unique celebration of student achievement.

Last Friday we surveyed our graduating students and asked them what they preferred we do for them if it was determined we couldn't hold Commencement on May 17. The response was phenomenal, and students overwhelmingly expressed support for an alternate date later in the year.

Thus, we will work to honor their wishes and begin preparations for a ceremony in late summer or early fall. There are many details we still need to address, so we will continue to communicate with you on this topic. While we remain hopeful a summer or fall event will be possible, we must also recognize the reality that the pandemic may again impact this event.

Hiring Freeze

Even though we've taken great measures to ensure the university continues to operate and students continue to learn under these extraordinary circumstances, the pandemic has already had a significant financial impact on our institution. The uncertainty of these times requires us to take precautions that will help us weather what we can expect will be a continuing hardship.

Until further notice, the University of Kansas is implementing a strategically focused hiring freeze that will serve as an initial step to address financial implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. A hiring freeze will help us begin to re-establish our financial footing as we map out a structured recovery plan.

These decisions are never easy and often raise new questions. We've worked with several campus leaders to develop guidelines that help us remain true to our mission while also being fiscally responsible:

- Our practice, until further notice, is a freeze on all new hiring, with exceptions considered for positions directly related to:
 - Critical campus and community safety
 - Continuity of critical research mission
 - Continuity of critical education mission
 - Continuity of critical business functions
 - Contribution to critical healthcare / clinical mission
- All above exceptions will be subject to approval by central institutional leadership.
 - Senior area leader (such as a dean, vice chancellor, vice provost) approval will be required before consideration by institutional leadership
 - A documented process will be defined for exception requests; identifying for example, information to be submitted by requestors, identification of central leaders to consider exception requests, etc.
- Positions fully funded on external grants or contracts do not need

central approval.

- Written employment offers already made to, and accepted by, job candidates will be honored.
- Written employment offers already made to a candidate, but not yet formally accepted by the candidate, must be reviewed by the hiring area. The review process will consider pushing out the proposed start date, rescinding the offer, or moving forward as offered assuming the candidate moves quickly to accept the written offer.

We also are adopting a salary increase freeze until further notice. As with the hiring freeze, we have developed guidelines, which will help ensure we approach mission-critical salary adjustments as transparently and fairly as possible.

- The default practice until further notice is a freeze on all salary increases, with exceptions considered for:
 - Adjustments to minimum salary of applicable pay range, with approval of Human Resource Management
 - Adjustments to meet KU-defined, living wage goals, with HRM approval
 - Other critical adjustments for retention, equity, and other factors
- These exceptions will be subject to approval by central institutional leadership
 - Senior area leader (such as a dean, vice chancellor, or vice provost) approval will be required before consideration by institutional leadership
 - A documented process will be defined for exception requests, identifying for example, information to be submitted by requestors, identification of central leaders to consider exception requests, etc.
- Faculty promotion and tenure adjustments are exempt from these salary freeze guidelines.

Business Travel

Recent updates from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have led us to review our university sponsored travel guidelines. **Business-related travel within Kansas and Missouri is discontinued for the time being.** This is in addition to previously announced discontinuation of university sponsored domestic and international business-related travel at meetings, conferences, etc. Now is also an appropriate time to encourage you to exercise extreme caution around your personal travel as well, as many areas of the country are seeing a rapid rise in identified cases.

Summer Session

Faculty and students should plan for all courses to be presented in an online format. We will continue to monitor conditions to determine the potential to

return to in-person instruction during the summer.

The summer months are also a busy time for units across campus that host youth programs, activities and camps, as well as outreach and engagement events. Deans and other unit leaders will have discretion regarding whether to continue these efforts, and they've been asked to explore opportunities to engage virtually and to prioritize the health and welfare of participants in their decisions.

Refunds

Many have asked about the potential for refunds on unused services, such as for housing, parking or dining plans. We have a team of staff finalizing plans to offer redress for certain services. We hope to offer more detailed information to students and parents as early as Friday.

Before we go further, we want to commend KU Student Housing staff for the hard task they've undertaken. During the past two weeks, KU Student Housing has facilitated move-out of thousands of students while following CDC recommendations for social distancing. Staff continue to support more than 500 students, many of whom relocated within KU Student Housing.

Finals

We know many of you have thoughts about finals. This is on our radar and will be addressed in the near future. Just as with our recently announced grading options for students on the Lawrence and Edwards Campus, these seemingly simple parts of our operations can have far-reaching impact and deserve thoughtful attention before making a university-wide decision.

University Update

Please join us online for the [University Update](#) at 4:30 this afternoon. We'll share updates about COVID-19's impact on KU. We'll offer updates and reminders on key areas of campus and let you know more about what we think we can expect in the weeks and months ahead.

Be Part of the Solution

Jayhawks, we can't stress enough how important it is that you each take seriously social distancing and stay-at-home measures, as well as hygiene and cleaning recommendations. We want you back with us in person, not just on a screen. Our road to renew campus, to hold Commencement, to revitalize our operations – it all depends on you, your classmates, your colleagues, and your friends and family members being active participants in efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19. Please be a part of the solution and encourage others to be part of our recovery efforts, too.

Respectfully,

Doug and Barb

Douglas A. Girod
Chancellor

Barbara A. Bichelmeyer
Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor

