



## Campuses Close Due to Virus

Colleges shift classes online, more conferences are canceled and basketball games are played in empty stadiums. A roundup of the latest COVID-19 developments in higher ed.

By [Elizabeth Redden](#) March 9, 2020

The spread of the new coronavirus continues to cause major disruptions to higher education.

Colleges in California, New York and Washington -- the states where the largest number of cases have been reported -- have closed their campuses or moved instruction online for the remainder of the quarter in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the new coronavirus.



Stanford University, where a medical faculty member has [tested positive for the virus](#), on Friday [announced](#) the cancellation of all in-person classes for the remaining two weeks of the winter quarter in favor of moving to online formats "to the extent feasible." Scheduled in-person exams for the quarter will be given as take-home tests. (Stanford said professors will have the option of submitting grades based on work completed to date in cases where remote delivery of a course or exam is not feasible, but added that "instructors are encouraged to provide students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge at the end of the quarter.")

Stanford also said all large group events are being canceled or adjusted. A weekend for newly admitted students in late April has been canceled, and the undergraduate admission office is canceling campus tours and information sessions through at least April 15.

The University of Washington similarly [said on Friday](#) it would hold all classes and exams remotely through the end of the winter quarter March 20 after a staff member [tested positive](#) for the new coronavirus (the test used was developed by UW's medical school, and the diagnosis must be confirmed by public health officials). The campuses themselves remain open, including hospitals and clinics, dining services,

residence halls, libraries, and recreation and athletics facilities. Athletic events are proceeding as scheduled.

Lake Washington Institute of Technology took the further step of [closing its campus](#) and moving to remote operations through March 20. A faculty member tested positive for the virus on Wednesday, and a group of faculty and students, mostly nursing students, have been self-quarantined after visiting a long-term nursing facility that's been [connected to 14 deaths from the virus](#).

The move toward online instruction appears to be the norm rather than the exception in the Seattle area. Other colleges in the area that have moved all or most instruction online include [Bellevue College](#), [Cascadia College](#), the [Seattle Colleges](#), [Seattle University](#) and [Shoreline Community College](#). Everett Community College [said](#) most courses would be moved online with some exceptions, including aviation classes and clinical classes for nursing students. An Everett student who was last on campus Feb. 27 has tested positive for the virus.

In Tacoma, Wash., [Pacific Lutheran University](#) and the [University of Puget Sound](#) also announced a shift to online instruction.

Yeshiva University, a Jewish university in New York City, has reported that both a student and a professor have tested positive for the virus. The university [canceled all classes at its Washington Heights and Midtown campuses](#) until after the Purim holiday, which starts tonight and ends tomorrow, and has postponed all large social events, including a basketball tournament and Purim celebrations.

[Columbia University](#) announced Sunday evening that classes would not be held today and tomorrow "because a member of our community has been quarantined as a result of exposure to the coronavirus." Classes will be shifted online for the rest of the week. [Barnard College](#) announced the same approach.

The [Jewish Theological Seminary](#), which is located near Columbia, has canceled classes for today, Wednesday and Thursday (classes having already been canceled for Purim on Tuesday).

Other universities outside California, New York and Washington have also canceled classes. Rice University canceled in-person classes and undergraduate teaching labs this week after an employee contracted the virus during overseas travel. Rice said research will continue, since it typically takes place in small group settings, but Rice is prohibiting all on-campus events involving 100 or more people through April 30.

Midland University, in Nebraska, has [closed its campus through March 15](#) after Nebraska reported its first case of the new coronavirus. Residence halls and dining facilities remain open. Merritt Nelson, Midland's vice president for enrollment management and marketing, said some Midland football players had volunteered at a local Special Olympics basketball tournament where they may have been in close contact with the affected individual. Nelson said 65 students -- none of whom are showing symptoms -- have been quarantined as a precautionary measure.

## Concerns About International Students

The Department of Education [issued guidance](#) last week saying it was relaxing rules that typically require colleges to get permission from the department and from their accreditors to shift instruction online. The possibility that more institutions nationwide might need to move to online courses has raised special concerns about international students, who are [required to take most of their courses in person](#) under the terms of their visas.

On Friday, Joseph E. Aoun, the president of Northeastern University -- which has a Seattle campus -- wrote to Chad F. Wolf, the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, asking for relief from in-person learning requirements for international students.

“Providing flexibility to permit students to pursue their dreams unfettered from the threat of violation of immigration status or visa revocation is a common-sense and essential approach in this time of unprecedented public health concerns,” Aoun wrote.

A spokeswoman for Homeland Security’s Student and Exchange Visitor Program, Carissa Cutrell, said the agency will be addressing this issue in forthcoming guidance that will give colleges flexibility. Cutrell said the agency “plans to mirror the Department of Education guidance. SEVP-certified schools will be able to adapt their procedures and policies to address the significant public health concerns associated with COVID-19. Schools will be required to use a form to report COVID-19 procedural adaptations to SEVP to ensure that nonimmigrant students can continue to make normal progress in a full course of study as required by federal regulations. More details will be provided to SEVIS users next week.” (SEVIS is an abbreviation for the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, the federal database through which colleges report the statuses of their international students.)

## Academic and University Travel

Colleges have canceled many study abroad programs and suspended university-sponsored travel abroad. At first, colleges [canceled programs in countries that have been hard hit by the virus](#) -- most notably China, Italy and South Korea -- but increasingly they have [begun canceling](#) all university-sponsored travel abroad for the spring and, in some cases, summer. Colleges that have canceled summer study abroad programs include [Louisiana State University](#), [Morgan State University](#) and the [University of Maryland, College Park](#). Some colleges, [including Harvard University](#), have [suspended domestic air travel by staff and faculty](#).

An increasing number of academic conferences have been called off. The American Educational Research Association announced Friday it would not move ahead with its annual meeting in San Francisco that had been scheduled for April 17 to 21. The association said it would organize a virtual meeting instead.

“Sadly, the pernicious presence and spread of the coronavirus internationally, including in recent weeks and days in the United States, makes it both impossible to hold a meeting that would even approximate the value of our annual place-based gathering

and irresponsible to encourage, expect, or stand silent when attendees could be exposed to a communicable disease, affect Bay area workers or residents, and return to their homes transmitting an illness to family and friends even before it manifests itself," AERA's executive director, Felice J. Levine, said in an email announcing the cancellation. "This is coupled with the recent State of Emergency declared by the mayor of San Francisco last week, a further Declaration by the Governor, and growing incidence of confirmed reports in California and in the United States.

"As a research association, we adhere to the realities and the facts involved, including heeding precautions limiting travel and remaining within one's community except under the most urgent and extraordinary of circumstances. An annual conference has many wonderful strengths, but it just cannot be classified as urgent or extraordinary in the face of the heightened risk. Those members and colleagues who are already registered will receive full refunds of their AERA Annual Meeting registration fee."

The SXSW EDU Conference & Festival, an annual event focused on innovation in learning that was scheduled to take place in Austin, Tex., this week, has also been called off [by city of Austin officials](#).

### **Other Coronavirus News**

Johns Hopkins University on Friday barred fans from the opening games of the Division III basketball tournament it was hosting, [according to Politico](#). "In light of Maryland's recently confirmed cases of COVID-19, and based on CDC guidance for large gatherings, we have determined that it is prudent to hold this tournament without spectators," Johns Hopkins' athletic department said. "We are not making any determination about other JHU events at this time; while we await further guidance from public health authorities, we will be assessing large events on a case-by-case basis."

Bowdoin College also said it was sanitizing spaces on campus after a student who had been studying abroad in Italy visited the campus, [according to WGME](#). Italy has the largest number of coronavirus cases in Europe, and Italian officials took the drastic step of [putting a region of 16 million under quarantine Sunday](#). Bowdoin officials said a second student who returned from Italy was in downtown Brunswick, Me., where the college is located, and met with a Bowdoin student. Four other students who came back from Italy have not been on the campus.

The University of Southern California on Friday announced plans to test its capabilities to host classes online by replacing in-person classes with online modalities for three days starting this Wednesday. "During Spring Recess, we will review feedback from faculty, students, and staff to determine how to improve the online experience," USC said in [a memo](#). "Should the situation erode and we need to take stronger measures, we will be able to smoothly and quickly adapt, having tested our resources for three days."

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/03/09/roundup-news-coronavirus-and-higher-ed>