

Dear UMCES Students,

Changes are happening rapidly with respect to the USM response to the COVID-19 threat, but the UMCES VPE office will attempt to keep you apprised of the latest directives and to answer your questions to the best of our ability. Christina Goethel (UMCES GSC Chair) and UMCES VPE Larry Sanford are participating in regular meetings of the UMCES Crisis Communications Team, Amy Griffin (VPE Assistant) and Christina are fielding faculty and student questions and directing them appropriately, and we are keeping your interests and needs at the forefront of discussions.

The main points for now are:

1. All UMCES students are enrolled at both UMCES and another USM campus; most are enrolled through UMCP. In general, students should follow ACADEMIC guidance on class scheduling, instruction delivery, committee meetings, defenses, etc. that come from their other USM home. For example, all MEES courses will follow UMCP guidance for scheduling, such that there will be no course meetings during the weeks of March 16-20 and March 23-27. The UMCP COVID-19 information page is at <https://umd.edu/virusinfo>.
2. Almost all UMCES students are also UMCES employees or for these purposes are considered UMCES employees. Therefore, students should follow UMCES advice on PERSONNEL AND WORK issues. For example, students should check with their supervisors about reporting to their units for work or working from home, and should follow UMCES guidelines for gatherings, meetings, and travel. UMCES COVID-19 information page is at <https://www.umces.edu/coronavirus>.
3. Please talk to your professors about how to attend class. If there is room in your classroom to achieve safe social distancing (at least 6 ft with good ventilation) and if you are at work, then you may want to attend class in person. However, starting on March 30 all UMCES classes will NOT REQUIRE in-person attendance. You may participate from your office (if UMCES is open for business) or from home. If you need help with adequate technology to participate remotely, please let your professors, your unit IT department and the VPE office know.
4. Current UMCP academic guidance is moving towards allowing committee meetings, qualifying exams, proposal defenses, and thesis/dissertation defenses to take place online/remotely. A final decision has not yet been made, but we will let you know as soon as we find out.
5. UMCES and MEES are well-positioned for transitioning to fully online/remote instruction. We are already accredited to offer this form of instruction and can do so with very few changes.
6. We are focused on ensuring that students can continue their education and obtain credit for their work during this difficult period.

Your VPE Office is here to help! If you have any questions, concerns, or ideas, please let us know. We will inform you of significant changes as soon as we hear about them.

Best,

Larry Sanford and Amy Griffin
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