

From: [Office of the Chancellor](#)
Subject: A Message From the Chancellor
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Colleagues,

I hope this finds you and your families safe and healthy. We recognize that this continues to be a trying time for our campus community. We are beginning to learn of members of our Spartan community with symptoms of COVID-19 in quarantine off campus, and families who have experienced the pain of loved ones becoming ill. We extend our deepest condolences to anyone experiencing hospitalization or loss of a loved one during this time.

Please continue to practice all safety protocols, including social distancing. Our [Health Services](#) practitioners are available to you, as is the [Employee Assistance Program](#). Your dedication and resilience will allow us to come through this crisis, and I am grateful for your commitment to this university and our students.

I wanted to share a few updates with you as we move forward during these unprecedented times. We are working with a variety of state agencies, including the Commission on Higher Education, on coordinated responses to the pandemic, and I confer regularly with my counterparts across the state to help ensure that our response is in alignment with other public universities, as appropriate.

Developments of note include the following:

Student Reimbursements: We have communicated with students and parents to clarify the CHE's guidance regarding student reimbursements. Because your efforts allowed USC Upstate to transition seamlessly to online teaching, students will not receive tuition refunds. They are, however, eligible for prorated housing and dining reimbursements. The Enrollment Services team is managing this process, to include assisting students with setting up direct deposit to expedite the return of any funds.

Federal Assistance From CARES Act: As you may have read, USC Upstate expects to receive approximately \$6 million from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to help offset costs related to disrupted operations caused by the pandemic. At least half of this funding will be used to provide emergency cash grants for students. Further guidance from the DOE regarding expenditure of these funds will be forthcoming.

University Budget Planning: Our leadership team is working to project short- and long-term impacts of the pandemic on campus. Your division leaders have been asked to freeze all but critical hiring. We will delay some capital projects, assess all contracts and develop plans for additional cost-

savings, should they be required. These next few weeks will be significant in terms of gauging the necessity of implementation of these measures. The S.C. General Assembly is expected to return to session early this fall to pass a budget bill for the upcoming fiscal year.

Employee Safety: We continue to follow closely all protocols to ensure the health and safety of employees who must work on campus. To date, we are aware of one employee who is awaiting COVID-19 test results, and those who were in contact with this employee have been notified. We are also aware of off-campus students and employees who have exhibited symptoms clinically compatible with COVID-19 or may have been exposed to persons with the virus. Please continue to monitor for symptoms and contact Health Services with any questions or concerns. We recommend the use of masks for anyone who will be in contact with fellow employees while on campus.

Residence Halls: All but a very few students have been able to retrieve their personal belongings from the residence halls on campus. The facilities team has begun work to thoroughly clean the buildings and ready them for fall. The move-out was well orchestrated to limit numbers of people on campus at any given time, and to mitigate possible exposure to the virus. Students remaining on campus have been situated so as to promote appropriate social distancing.

Drive-through COVID-19 Testing: Working with Commissioner David Church, USC Upstate was able to assist in setting up the drive-through testing site on campus for the Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System. This by-appointment-only site has worked well, with the university providing signage and police officers to help direct traffic. We are proud to have the opportunity to partner with SRHS in combating this pandemic.

Online Summer School: There are few people actually working in-person on campus now, as faculty and students have successfully made a transition to online learning. To promote continuity in instruction for our students, USC Upstate will offer numerous new courses to be taught online this summer. Our Communications and Marketing team is working closely with Enrollment Services and Academic Affairs to promote these offerings to current students, as well as to those who may not be enrolled at USC Upstate fulltime, but would like to take advantage of new courses. Our new provost, David Schecter, coined the phrase “UP and Running” to promote our summer offerings.

Commencement Planning: By necessity, we have cancelled our May Commencement ceremony and are working closely with President Caslen and the UofSC System to coordinate plans for any in-person celebrations. In the meantime, we have distributed a survey to our graduating seniors to gather their preferences around an alternative commencement, whether that is to host a ceremony later in the year, or pursue virtual options. We will keep you informed as we receive feedback and decisions are made.

Thank you again for all you are doing to ensure the success of our students. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns, and I hope you all stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,



J. Derham Cole, Jr.
Interim Chancellor

University of South Carolina Upstate
800 University Way | Spartanburg, SC 29303

***Up* is where we live.**