



March 14, 2020

Dear Bennett College Family,

This past week has been a challenging one as the coronavirus continues to quickly progress. To ensure the health and well-being of our Bennett College community, and in accordance with CDC and WHO guidance, the College is announcing a transition to remote instruction beginning Monday, March 16, 2020 for the remainder of the semester and is requiring students to move out of their residence halls by Monday, March 23, 2020 at noon.

I want to thank all of our students, faculty, staff and families for being ever-vigilant in practicing social distancing and good hygiene practices as we all returned from Spring Break last Sunday, March 9, 2020. We have been able to take advantage of our early Spring Break and smallness to stay on campus longer than other institutions. There have been no coronavirus cases at Bennett College or in Guilford County.

As we have made adjustments in the past week, I appreciate the level of calm and thoughtful reflection you have demonstrated in the midst of this quickly evolving situation. COVID-19 is certainly a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) situation. We have been practicing and excelling in our responses to VUCA environments all year. We are ready for this next phase to ensure that our community remains safe.

Special Circumstances

The timing and pacing of this decision has been a measured approach because we have been taking into consideration the multiple contexts from which our students come to Bennett College: the financial burden of returning home so soon after Spring Break; as well as the need to consider students who are Pell-eligible, have housing or food insecurity, are foster youth, or homeless. We wanted to support our students as long as we could so do safely.

Students who have special circumstances that we should be aware of should be in contact with Dean Kimberley Drye-Dancy.

Remote Learning

Faculty have each put together remote action plans and will provide more details to each student about how to access classes remotely. For students, our goal is to make sure that your academic work is fairly recognized and you are able to continue to make academic progress toward your degrees.

Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff are asked to report for work and maintain their regular hours. College employees should contact their supervisors with specific questions during this period.





Commencement

Commencement will be a virtual celebration this year. Since commencement is just seven weeks out and we do not know when the Governor of North Carolina's Executive Order banning gatherings of more than 100 people will be lifted, there will be no in-person ceremony in May. Details about the virtual ceremony will be forthcoming. The College will confer degrees for students who complete all pending degree requirements this academic semester. Your degree will be mailed. Please make sure your mailing address is up-to-date.

Honoring Our Legacy

As I mentioned in my remarks on Senior Day, being a member of the Academy means, being a leader; keeping calm; resisting panic, rumors and gossip; and offering measured, thoughtful, and informed support to others. It is now our turn to join together to thoughtfully and calmly transition to a campus community working remotely. Continue to support one another. This is when we need each other most—when we are not face-to-face. This is when Sisterhood matters. Check in on each other. Help be tech support for your Sister or Professor or Colleague. Have patience and empathy with each other and the new modality. Most importantly, stay safe. Continue to practice great hygiene.

As you start diving into working remotely, remember our Bennett Sisters who 60 years ago this year, had to figure out how to get their schoolwork done while in jail as part of the Sit-Ins. We owe it to them to live up to their legacy by excelling this semester and once again show how Bennett College women are the most resilient, smart, and creative leaders in the world. Nothing will stop us.

Have a great rest of the semester and please stay in touch via social media.

Suzanne Elise Walsh, JD
President

