

COVID-19 HITS MICHIGAN

GLOBAL PANDEMIC PROMPTS UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

On March 10, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer declared a state of emergency after two cases of COVID-19, a disease caused by a member of the coronavirus family, were confirmed in Michigan.

There are now more than 1,000 U.S. cases, and universities across the country – including Michigan State – have moved classes online in response to the pandemic.

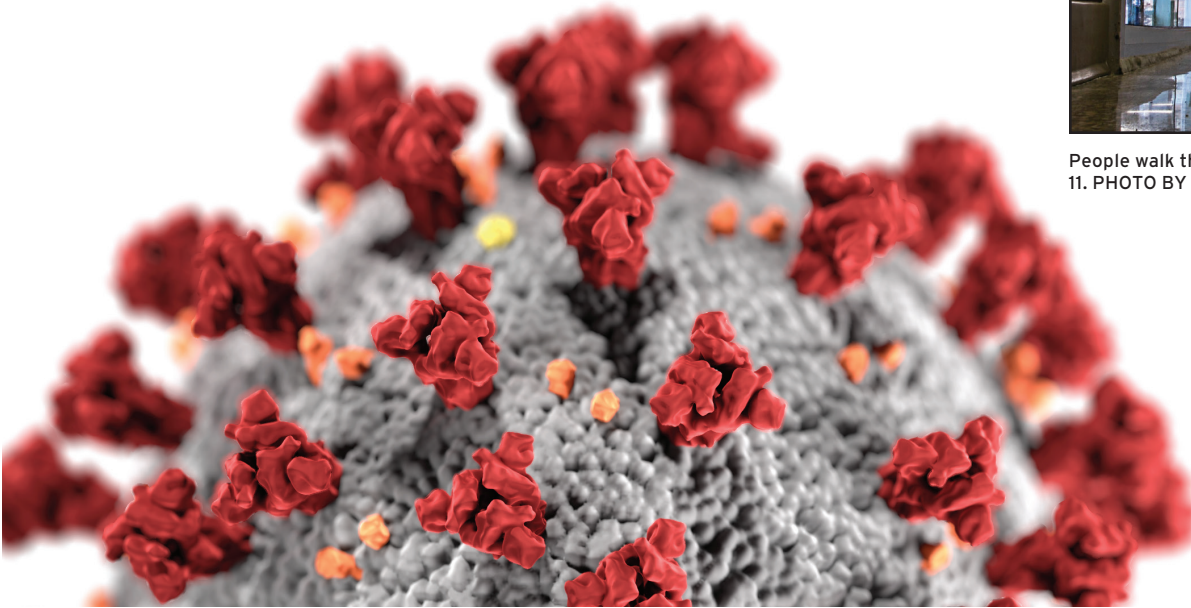


Image provided by the Centers for Disease Control, or CDC

CORONAVIRUS TIMELINE

How news of its impact on MSU's campus evolved

By The State News Staff
feedback@statenews.com

In the wake of two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Michigan, Michigan State suspended face-to-face instruction Wednesday and strongly encouraged students to return to their permanent places of residence.

“MSU is suspending face-to-face instruction in lectures, seminars and classroom settings and moving coursework to virtual instruction,” President Samuel L. Stanley Jr. said in an email. “This suspension of in-person classes will last until Monday, April 20 and we will reevaluate this decision on an ongoing basis, sharing additional updates or modifications as more information becomes available.”

Stanley also said the university learned the Ingham County Health Department is investigating and monitoring an individual linked to MSU’s campus.

News of the disease and its impact on campus has evolved over time, from statements saying MSU’s risk of exposure is unlikely to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer declaring a state of emergency to the World Health Organization calling the coronavirus a pandemic.

Jan. 24 – University Physician addresses China coronavirus outbreak

MSU Physician David Weismantel issued a statement Jan. 24 about the recent outbreak of a coronavirus originating in Wuhan, China.

While MSU leaders recognized the concern, the risks of being exposed to this virus at MSU are unlikely, Daniel Olsen, MSU deputy spokesperson, said.

Jan. 27 – Three Michigan cases undergo testing for coronavirus

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, or MDHHS, approved testing for three new possible cases of the Novel Coronavirus — two in Washtenaw County and one in Macomb County.

“At MDHHS, we recognize the potential threat associated with this virus and are working to identify any suspect cases in Michigan,” Joneigh Khaldun, MDHHS chief medical executive and chief deputy for health said in a press release.

Jan. 28 – Three Michigan coronavirus samples test negative

Three possible cases of 2019 Novel Coronavirus in Michigan came back negative, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, or MDHHS. A fourth possible case from Washtenaw County was sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, for testing.

State health officials were pleased with the results, Khaldun said in a press release.

Jan. 30 – MSU halts China travel as coronavirus spreads

MSU announced it would halt the next eight weeks of all non-essential university travel to China just as the World Health Organization, or WHO, declared the novel coronavirus a global health emergency.

Feb. 14 – MSU students address diversity concerns during board meeting

At the February Board of Trustees meeting, MSU students spoke about the Wharton Center incident, the coronavirus and international student rights.

Feb. 21 – Coronavirus halts additional MSU travel abroad

The university physician sent out an update on coronavirus to the MSU community suspending all university-sponsored travel to China, Singapore and Hong Kong through the end of July.

“This suspension takes effect today and includes all study abroad programs in those countries,” Weismantel said.

GO GREEN, GO HOME:

Students react to MSU suspending classes

By Wendy Guzman
wguzman@statenews.com

Business sophomore Bryce Dolan said he didn’t expect the coronavirus — which the World Health Organization declared a pandemic — to cause Michigan State to suspend face-to-face instruction.

After the confirmation of two COVID-19 cases in Michigan, President Samuel L. Stanley Jr. sent an email March 11 announcing classes will be moved online, and students had many initial reactions.

“I guess I’m surprised that it’s this serious, and I didn’t expect it to happen here,” Dolan said. “I just think it’s pointless. Like, you’re not gonna eliminate face-to-face contact, right?”

Once the email was sent around 10 a.m., students quickly flooded the hallways of on-campus buildings making phone calls to family.

Many questioned their safety, how they would adapt to online classes and housing situations.

Dolan is employed by MSU and said he was also concerned about whether he would continue working.

“I’m confused whether I’ll continue to keep working or not since MSU shut down face to face, because I work at a restaurant area,” Dolan said.

Many students were surprised, while others were not since MSU followed in the

footsteps of other big universities.

“I have friends over at (Ohio State), and their school’s online, and I figured since they’re so close it’s bound to happen here,” business freshman Nick Debaker said. “I just assumed after seeing the article last night that we’ll get an email today about classes going online.”

Many international students have to remain in East Lansing, despite the university encouraging students to return to their permanent homes. China has halted flights in and out of the country, preventing some from going back even if they wanted to, Chinese international student Yuxuan Zhang said.

Zhang said families of MSU students in China are happy the university moved to online classes, as classes in China have stopped for a while now.

“Back home, we already have a lot of our classes suspended because of the coronavirus right now,” Zhang said. “So we worry that there is going to be a spread of the disease because of the people interacting with each other.”

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer held a press conference March 10 announcing the first confirmed case in the state and declared a state of emergency.

Pre-nursing sophomore Josie Smith said she was unaware of the announcement and found out through Stanley’s email.

“It’s surprising,” Smith said. “It’s sad, too. I’m sorry that the people are sick. ... I honestly think that university could provide more instruction on universal health practices, like students washing your hands, not touching your face.”

Accounting senior Eric Burley said he believes the university was right to take precautions early to avoid later fallout.

“I think it’s better (to) stay on the side of caution, especially with the students,” Burley said. “I think they definitely want to make sure that, ‘Hey, let’s just get this right right now, even if we have to cancel classes a little early, it’s better to be safe with it then be late on it.”

Debaker and Burley both said they plan to stay on campus. Other students said they were quick to make arrangements to head home.

The university has posted signs around campus cautioning students about the coronavirus.

Burley said the possibility of online classes should have been addressed to instructors sooner, as most found out when the students did and had little time to prepare.

“Because I have a bunch of classes that I have to do group presentations in. ... I don’t think they’re going to happen now,” Burley said. “But I get that, you know, no one really probably saw this coming.”



A man walks through the Edward J. Minskoff Pavilion on March 11. PHOTO BY ALYTE KATILIUS



Michigan State University students navigate campus with caution after President Stanley’s announcement on March 11, canceling all in-person classes until April 20. PHOTO BY DI’AMOND MOORE

March 10 – MSU suspends international, non-essential domestic travel

Stanley sent an email to the community Tuesday announcing that all university-sponsored international travel and non-essential domestic travel would be cancelled.

The letter came just after universities across the country began canceling in-person classes.

“MSU is preparing for a variety of possible scenarios and campus units have plans and resources in place for a potential outbreak,” Stanley said in the email.

March 10 – Two COVID-19 cases confirmed in Michigan, Whitmer declares state of emergency

Whitmer announced a state of emergency following two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Michigan.

The two individuals who have COVID-19 are in the metro Detroit area. One is a female adult from Oakland County, who had traveled internationally, and one is a male adult from Wayne County, who had traveled domestically. Both are currently hospitalized.

March 10 – MSU prepares online framework as some schools cancel classes

MSU began preparing a potential transition to online classes. Stanley touched on this issue of in-classroom learning in his most recent email to the MSU community.

“MSU has been preparing for pivoting the campus to online learning should that decision be required,” Stanley said.

March 11 – MSU suspends in-person classes until April 20

The transition to virtual instruction happened at noon Wednesday.

During the period of virtual instruction, students can return to their permanent residence and work remotely, per Stanley’s email. MSU is strongly recommending this because there are “advantages for social distancing.”

“But for those not able to go home, we will continue to fully support students in our residence halls and dining facilities,” Stanley wrote.