As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to escalate, experts confirm that, even though a majority of the population is likely to contract the virus at some point, the vast majority will recover quickly without major complications. (CDC Risk Summary) We are thankful for this comforting news.

We also care deeply about the small minority in our community who may be more adversely impacted if infected. Therefore, we will continue to be diligent about taking decisive and proactive steps to “flatten the curve.” You can read more about that here. Flattening the curve in the Permian Basin will allow our local health care systems to preserve capacity to treat those who are likely to require more critical care. The evidence is clear: if we act quickly to slow the rate of infection, over a longer period of time, it will make a difference. This is the goal of our actions.

Today, I am announcing additional action steps for our University. Essential operations will continue uninterrupted. This includes our promise to maintain academic progress for our students who will be able to complete their semester.

We will ensure the success of our mission despite these added challenges. To accomplish these goals we will have to approach our work differently. Thank you in advance for your extra patience and flexibility.

**NEW UPDATES:**

**UTPB STUDENTS:**

- After the spring break extension for face-to-face students, all instruction will go online starting March 23rd. Students will not be required to return to campus after the extended Spring Break. Your professors will contact you with an online instructional plan before the end of next week.

- Students are encouraged when feasible to stay home and not return to campus. However, we are not closing student services or housing for those who may need to stay on campus. This includes dining services. We can also assist with shipping necessary items to those who will decide not to return. Please contact Dr. Spurlock with any questions or challenges you have as a result of this new information, including technology issues related to completing courses online. Spurlock_b@utpb.edu.

- No clinical hours, labs, or practicums will be held next week and more information will be provided by your faculty about how these requirements will be handled.

**STEM STUDENTS:**

- The STEM Academy will extend their spring break for students until March 27th (two additional weeks). More information will be provided by STEM leadership for staff and teachers.
**STAFF:**

- UTPB will close Monday, March 16th and Tuesday, March 17th for all “non-essential” personnel. You will be notified by Sunday at 7:00 p.m. if you are required to work on Monday. If you do not receive notification, please report to work on Wednesday, March 18th.

- UTPB will be finalizing a more flexible work policies to address changing circumstances with K-12 school closures and COVID-19 issues. The policy will include more options for staggered work schedules combined with additional opportunities to expand telecommuting. More information will be available on Tuesday, March 17th.

- We will also be finalizing an emergency leave policy specifically related to COVID-19. This policy will address strategies to support employees who will need help navigating COVID related challenges. More details will be available on Tuesday March 17th.

**FACULTY:**

- As already discussed, next week will be used for training and finalizing all online instructional plans. You will be required to gain approval from your respective dean for all online instructional plans on or before Friday, March 20th and will be required to communicate those approved plans with students prior to March 23rd.

- Instructional and technical support will be available on site to assist next week and the schedule of workshops is available through FalconOnline.

**TRAVEL/REQUIREMENT TO REPORT AND SELF-ISOLATE**

- If you traveled to any of the countries listed as Level 2 or Level 3, you must report this to HR immediately. If you are a student, please report this information to Dr. Spurlock Spurlock_b@utpub.edu. You will not be allowed to return to the University until the self-isolation period of 14 days is completed per CDC guidance. We will provide COVID leave for these work days for employees and students will be accommodated for academic purposes.

- If you have symptoms or feel sick do not come to work. Please reach out to your supervisor and consult your medical provider.

- If you traveled to an area in the US with significant outbreaks, please follow CDC guidance. If you feel you may have been exposed to someone with the virus, follow the advice of the CDC which include contacting your medical provider and report your concern to your supervisor.

- Because so many Falcons traveled over the spring break, please review the CDC guidelines about when you will need to self-quarantine and not return to the University. If you traveled to any Level 2 or 3 country or an area in the U.S. with significant exposure you must report to your supervisor before returning to work. This link provides a list of the countries that are included along with other important information.