Dear Riverland Colleagues,

Welcome to another week of uncertainties regarding the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). In this communication I will attempt to give you a few updates pertinent to Riverland, what we are doing so far, and our future plans. The Chancellor has extended the preparation time for faculty and staff by one additional week; therefore, instruction will resume on March 30. Please remain vigilant but calm. Your health and safety are more important than the work. Be flexible. Seek assistance if necessary. Be kind and respectful. We are in this together and we will get through it together.

What we know as of today
In an attempt to slow the spread of coronavirus disease and reduce introduction of the virus into new communities, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that no gatherings with 50 people or more be held for the next 8 weeks. The CDC said its recommendation did not apply to “the day to day operation of organizations such as schools, institutes of higher learning, or businesses”. The CDC defers to the advice of local health officials.
Governor Tim Walz has declared a state of emergency to address the health crisis. “This may provide agencies with additional authority to adjust even legally required activities or timelines to protect the health and safety of state workers and all Minnesotans” (Minnesota Management & Budget BeReadyMN https://mn.gov/mmb/be-ready-mn/). Events serving high risk populations should be limited to less than 10 participants.

In a memo last night, Minnesota State Chancellor Devinder Malhotra said:

“These unprecedented times require us to think differently about the work that we do and the services that we offer. Many aspects of this issue continue to evolve and create a fluid and challenging situation...regardless of the changing circumstances, our priorities will always remain the same:

- To safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of our faculty, staff, and students
- To enable students to complete the spring semester and progress toward their educational goals

In light of the concerns that we have heard from campuses, we will extend the preparation time for faculty and staff by one additional week. Instruction will resume on March 30.”

What Riverland has done to date
Riverland has deployed its pandemic plan. We have formed several committees:
1. Overall Coordinating Committee (Adenuga Atewologun, Chair)
2. Academic and Student Affairs Administration Committee (Barb Embacher, Chair)
3. Operations Committee (Brad Doss, Chair)
4. Facilities and Operations Committee (Shawn O’Connor, Chair)
5. Healthcare Committee (Laura Beasley, Chair)
6. Communications Committee (James Douglass, Chair)

The committees have met, and we are implementing many recommendations to keep you safe and maintain continuity of essential operations. For instance, deep cleaning of the campus began in earnest. We will supply you with antibacterial cleaning wipes to keep your area cleaner and safer. Also, the Communications, Marketing and Media Relations Department continues to refresh the employee website with valuable web resources.

For the next ten days, Faculty, Deans, VP Barb Embacher, and VP Mark Baas will be working on ways to migrate as many of our courses as possible to alternate delivery method. This is a lot of heavy lifting, so I ask all to be patient and cooperative. Our objective is to finish the semester as close to or exactly on May 15.

The overall coordinating committee will meet every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:30 – 8:30 a.m. until further notice. Administration and bargaining unit representatives will meet on Wednesdays. We will have remote access for all meetings.

**Major Future Events**
The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has not changed the date of our accreditation visit scheduled for May 4 and 5.

Commencement and end or term dates have not changed. We will know more about the practicality of finishing the semester on May 15 after the faculty and academic deans complete their deliberations over the next 10 days.

If you traveled overseas over the spring break, please follow the guidelines sent to all employees. Out of state travel is severely curtailed. Check with the Finance and Human Resources Offices before you make any out-of-state business-related travel plans.

**Conclusion**
Practice good hygiene habits or as Google puts it “Do the FIVE”

1. Hands: Wash them often
2. Elbow: Cough into it
3. Face: Don’t touch it
4. Feet: Stay more than 3 feet apart
5. Feel: Sick? Stay home

Best regards,
Adenuga Atewologun
President