

Text pasted in below. Reviewed/approved by everyone except Chancellor Black. We have texted and called him.

From: Matt Kramer <kramerm@[REDACTED]>
To: GABEL, JOAN <jgabel@[REDACTED]>
Sent: April 1, 2020 4:16:10 PM CDT
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(And you likely saw my earlier note from minutes ago. [REDACTED])

Subj: COVID-19 Update from the President

Pre-header text:

Dear students, faculty, and staff,

Just a few weeks ago, we were preparing for a much-needed spring break. And four weeks ago—Wednesday, March 4—I sent you my first systemwide update about the University’s response to COVID-19. In less than 30 days, our world has changed in so many significant ways, and our lives have been disrupted to a degree that none of us could have imagined.

But there’s a quote in today’s [Inside Higher Ed](#) with which I completely agree: “If you’d asked most people months ago whether a higher education enterprise that many write off (often unfairly) as hidebound and change-averse was capable of a wholesale pivot in a matter of days or weeks, they’d have laughed. And yet it happened. Amazing.”

We are moving fast and we have made many changes. The expression “building the plane as you fly” captures a lot of what the last few weeks have been like, including the uncertainty of working through a challenge like we’re all experiencing.

Our Shared Response to this Challenge

What hasn’t changed is our commitment to service and to mission; our culture; and our willingness to adjust as new information and circumstances dictate. I want to acknowledge each and every one of you for how magnificently you’ve responded. Our faculty transitioned to alternative instructional formats in a matter of days. Researchers and experts across our system have dived into COVID-19 with [groundbreaking research](#), [new clinical trials](#), and even [homemade ventilators to serve critically ill patients](#). Staff have stepped up, from law enforcement and emergency responders who protect our campuses, to behind-the-scenes workers, particularly those in information technology, who are supporting our massive move to remote learning and working.

And to our students—I am so proud of you. You have demonstrated ultimate flexibility and understanding, yet commitment to the task—from the transition to online courses to navigating travel restrictions; from the close of study abroad programs to practicing preventative hygiene and social distancing. I am particularly proud of the way you have merged your talents and resourcefulness with our world-class faculty and staff to uplift your University community, serve our state, and impact the world.

To this end, I want you to know that every decision I make—that we as a University are making—is grounded in recognizing the importance of all of you—our students, faculty, staff—and, ultimately, the legacy of this incredible institution. Every one of these decisions affects many lives and comes with the responsibility to listen, shift as situations evolve, and respond to new information, context, and conditions.

Comprehensive Student Refund Proposal

Since conditions for all Minnesotans changed late last week as a result of the Governor’s “Stay at Home” order, my team has been working around the clock on a comprehensive student refund proposal that encompasses all students, at all levels, on all five of our campuses. This systemwide approach considers the Housing and Residential Life credits announced March 23, along with other expenses and fees in light of the “Stay at Home” mandate and related circumstances that have emerged. The proposal outlines appropriate financial credit in light of changes to University operations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This Friday, April 3, the Board of Regents will meet to consider my much more comprehensive proposal.

I look forward to sharing with you the details of my proposal as I brief the Board of Regents at 10 a.m. Friday. [You can watch the meeting live online](#). Shortly after the meeting I will communicate with you directly about the Board’s decision.

University COVID Action Network

Our ability to pivot and shift as a community reaches far beyond operations and expenses. You may be interested to know that with so many of our researchers and faculty tackling COVID-19 head on, we also identified that many of our researchers (and staff and students), while not engaged in medical work, had the capacity and the intellectual rigor to support our front-line medical staff with research, analysis, and idea generation. Faculty have created a systemwide team called the [University COVID Action Network \(U-CAN\)](#). You can [sign up, identify your talents](#), and then be called upon as needed. We are stronger with your support.

Be sure to visit our new [COVID-19 web site](#). Unlike the [Safe Campus site](#), which provides operational updates, the new site aggregates the collective response of our system to this worldwide challenge. You will be incredibly proud of the work that so many of your colleagues, friends, instructors, and faculty members have done in response to the pandemic.

We talk a lot about #UMNproud—our accomplishments, your achievements, our collective can-do spirit and impact on the State of Minnesota. But to us #UMNproud is also about service. I encourage you to continue to use #UMNproud to share your positive stories, and please visit [umn.edu](#) to see the many examples of our commitment to each other.

Please remember to [be healthy, safe, and well](#).

With warmest regards,

Joan Gabel

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