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Three Rivers College Moves to Virtual Learning in Response to COVID-19

MARCH 19TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff, MO - In preparation for a potential increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Southeast Missouri, Three Rivers College will move to virtual instruction on Monday, March 23, through the end of the 2020 Spring semester.

Face-to-face classes will continue to meet through Wednesday, March 18, and evening classes will meet on Thursday, March 19, unless otherwise informed by the instructor. In order to conduct necessary faculty collaboration and training, all face-to-face classes will be cancelled during the day on Thursday (Thursday night classes will meet) and all classes are cancelled for Friday, March 20. Classes currently online will continue to be held as normal. Certain technical education programs and nursing and allied health courses will continue to meet for specific lab times. Faculty will contact these students to inform them of the meeting times.

The decision to move to virtual instruction was made after consulting with faculty and community members. The College had been following the CDC guidelines for institutions of higher learning that do not have COVID-19 identified in their community, as well as staying in close contact with public health authorities.

“We decided not to wait and proactively started planning to move to virtual education for our students,” said Dr. Wesley Payne, President of Three Rivers College. “The health of our students is of the utmost importance to us and our focus will continue to be on student success.”

Three Rivers currently offers online classes for many courses, so the necessary technology is already in place and seasoned online instructors are ready to help with the transition. Many Three Rivers faculty have undergone extensive training in creating online classes to ensure online students receive the same high-quality education as face-to-face students. Those faculty are working with part-time adjunct faculty to make the transition as smooth as possible.

“In exploring new options for virtual learning, we are finding new and better tools,” said Payne. “I am confident we will emerge from this better and stronger and in an even better position to help our students achieve their educational goals.”

The College will remain open during normal business hours at all locations, and faculty and staff will be available during normal College hours. The Welcome Center will be open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. from March 17 through March 20. To provide more support for students during this transition, from March 23 through March 27 the Welcome Center will be open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. The Rutland Library and the Tutoring and Learning Center will be open during their normal times for the remainder of the week and will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. thereafter and will be available to offer services to students, including tutoring, computer labs, and library resources. Services at the Rutland Library and the TLC will be available both face-to-face and online for all students.?

The Rivers Ridge Apartments will remain open for any student who wishes to remain. Those students who wish to return to their homes will go through the normal check out process.

“Out of necessity, we’re making this change in the middle of the semester, which makes it harder on everyone,” said Payne. “I am proud and impressed with our team and our response to helping students. Everyone’s goal has been to take care of our students—who have trusted us in their pursuit of building a better future for themselves and their families.”

The College is also cancelling events through the end of the semester in response to COVID-19. “Regretfully, this cancellation will apply to our annual commencement ceremony,” said Payne.

Students who meet the requirements will receive their degrees and certificates and their graduation will be reflected on their transcripts. Any student planning to participate in the graduation ceremony will be allowed to participate in the next scheduled ceremony. Diplomas for all graduating students will be mailed after the end of the semester. Students with questions or concerns should email **mhamann@trcc.edu**.

Registration for Summer and Fall classes opens for current students on March 23 and can be done in person or virtually. Most students have education plans in place through the TRC student planning system. Advisor approval can be done virtually and registration can be completed online.

Registration opens for all on April 6. New students can visit trcc.edu/admissions/checklist for a Getting Started Checklist to guide them through the enrolling and registering process, or call the Welcome Center at 573-840-9605.

Students and employees who are sick are to remain home and not report to work or class. Specific screening programs are being put in place for members of the campus community. The College has increased sanitation protocols as recommended by the CDC.

If students have questions regarding academic instruction, they should contact the individual instructor or the appropriate department chairperson. Faculty and staff will stay in frequent contact with students in order to proactively address issues as they arise.

“We are doing everything we can to ensure this transition to virtual instruction is successful for all of our students,” said Payne. “We ask that students having issues reach out to us right away so we can address the issue.”

In addition to contacting instructors with academic questions, students can call the TRC Welcome Center at 573-840-9605 to get assistance with issues and answers to other questions.

Three Rivers College is committed to contributing to the quality of life in Southeast Missouri with quality, affordable higher education opportunities and community services that support and encourage the economic, civic, and cultural vitality of the region. For more information about college and workforce programs and upcoming events, visit trcc.edu.

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