



CATE SCHOOL
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March 11, 2020

Dear Cate Families,

In my 20th year at Cate, a number of folks asked me if I had “seen it all.” That was the same year the Thomas Fire and subsequent mudslides forced a host of evacuations and other unprecedented adjustments on this community. I told myself afterward that I would never again likely have to write letters of the sort that I did during those agonizing months spanning 2017-2018. Then came the coronavirus.

This threat is different, of course, but it is no less impactful or pernicious. Our Crisis Team reassembled some weeks ago to respond to this new viral challenge, and you know from our previous communications the various steps we have taken to protect this community. Today, I write to share news of another.

This morning, we made the decision to suspend the start of the third trimester. **We will extend our Spring Break by one week to allow our faculty to prepare all third trimester courses for online and digital delivery. Our faculty and staff will return to the Mesa as scheduled on Sunday, March 15.**

On Monday, March 23, we will begin the third trimester, though all of the course content will be offered online to the remote destinations where our students and families find themselves. Our intention is to deliver such content for two weeks. Provided it seems reasonable to do so and the public health implications are appropriately low, we will welcome our students back to the Mesa to resume the trimester in traditional fashion on Sunday, April 5. We will be in touch by Sunday, March 29, should plan change.

We appreciate the scale of this disruption and we are disappointed that we cannot start the trimester as planned. We have learned a good deal about responding to the unexpected, though, over the years. One of those lessons concerns the value of acting before there is an actual crisis. There are no current cases of COVID-19 in Santa Barbara County. There is one in Ventura County, but we have been assured by the Department of Public Health that the incidence of infection will increase and that the risk of a necessary school closure or isolation certainly exists. All of us manage risk in our own lives with a relative threshold. We can tolerate certain dangers if we alone are facing the adversity. But at Cate we cannot and must not assess risk the way individuals do. Too many young

people and their families are relying on our care and our judgment. That is exactly why we have made this decision at this time.

No doubt this news raises significant questions. We have prepared a website that is filled with FAQs and our responses, [which you can access here](#). We appreciate, too, that given travel restrictions many of our students are not currently at home or perhaps may not have access to reliable internet service. Because we do not want to put undue burden on our generous host families and we want to ensure access for all of our students to our online coursework, we are happy to host students requiring a place to stay here on campus in faculty homes. We will not open the dormitories but much like we did for day students after the mudslides three years ago, we will make rooms available in our homes to those who need them.

We have created a dedicated email address (questions@cate.org) which will be read by the entire Coronavirus Response Team. Feel free to use it if you need a place to stay or have questions that are not answered elsewhere. For those wishing to come on campus to pick up belongings, please use that email address to schedule your visit. We plan to keep the dorms locked while students are away, but we can certainly allow limited access to those who want or need it.

With respect to other visitors, we have essentially closed the campus until Sunday, April 5. Revisit Days for accepted students have been cancelled. Board of Trustee meetings, the Mesa Dinner, and the Prom have been postponed. Athletic contests for the next three weeks will be cancelled. Family Weekend on Friday, April 24 - Saturday, April 25 is still on the calendar, and we are hopeful that we will be able to celebrate it in much the same way we always do. Time will tell.

It is our intention to be in frequent communication as we build our digital delivery capabilities for coursework and as the dynamic situation with the coronavirus evolves. A recent article about dealing with this new threat advised that we respond with “creativity, flexibility, and sensitivity.” Those virtues are valuable at all times, but particularly now.

Our thoughts are very much with all of you in these unsettling times. Please let us know how we can help.

Servons,

Ben



<https://www.cate.org>

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