

Members of the South Texas College of Law Houston Community,

For the last several days, we have been monitoring closely the developments internationally, locally, and regionally. The information available during this time has been consistent: that all local cases of coronavirus were due to international travel. The collective wisdom of the experts was that transmission risk was low – which was indeed why local officials, until today, have permitted all activities in the area to continue (including Rodeo and Rockets games, where tens of thousands gathered in close proximity) and why no local school districts have cancelled classes.

Here at South Texas, we have continued to adhere to best practices. In addition to setting up our Emergency Operation Management Team, we have stepped up our cleaning and sanitizing, particularly in high traffic areas; we have done our best to ensure that individuals who are ill do not attend classes or enter the campus; and we have been making preparations for a situation in which we might have to teach remotely or to close campus completely.

If you watched the Rodeo news conference this afternoon, however, the recent case in Montgomery County indicates that there now is “community spread” in the region – which means that the virus now is being communicated from person to person. **This changes things. The health and safety of our community is of paramount importance, and this requires a drastic change in procedure – even from the processes that we had in place yesterday.** This change is a precautionary measure, as there remains no indication of any coronavirus issues in our South Texas community.

This situation is evolving VERY rapidly, and circumstances are changing daily – sometimes even hourly. No one has all of the information. Thus, what follows does not resolve every issue and every question. And, there necessarily will be updates in the days to come. Here is where we stand as of this evening:

- **Beginning tomorrow (Thursday, March 12), we will not have in-person classes on campus.**
 - For classes that would have met on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday of this week, professors will have the option of conducting the class via Zoom, recording the class, cancelling the class, rescheduling the class, or using some other mechanism to cover the material. Each professor will notify students of the particular guidance for each class.
 - For classes beginning on Monday, March 23, all classes will be taught remotely – either via Zoom or via some other mechanism as deemed appropriate by the professor.
 - We will re-evaluate the situation again the week of March 23 to determine when in-person classes on campus should resume.
- **All members of our community should prepare as if they will not have access to the building.** For instance, students should ensure that they take home all books, notes, and other materials they might need for class. Staff should ensure that they have what they need to work remotely.
- **The campus will remain open for now.** Staff and business operations will continue, and staff are expected to come to work. Campus operations may change, however – and perhaps with little notice.
- **We are in the process of reviewing what on-campus events will be permitted.**
- **All individuals are expected to take steps necessary to protect our community from the coronavirus.**
 - All individuals must report travel at www.stcl.edu/travel.

- For students, failure to register travel is deemed a **character and fitness** issue (the certification that the dean makes to the State Bar when one applies for a law license) and a **disciplinary** issue.
 - For staff, failure to register travel is deemed a **disciplinary** issue.
- Any individual who has traveled to [a Level 2 or Level 3 country](#) (even if the country is designated a Level 2 or Level 3 country within 2 weeks after the travel) **MUST** self-quarantine for 14 days before returning to campus.
 - For students, failure to self-quarantine is deemed a **character and fitness** issue and a **disciplinary** issue.
 - For staff, failure to self-quarantine is deemed a **disciplinary** issue.
- All individuals on campus will be expected to use appropriate [social distancing techniques](#).
- Every individual who is sick, as well as all individuals who believe they may have been in contact with the coronavirus, should stay off campus.
- It is strongly encouraged that all members of the community avoid international travel – particularly in light of the potential on U.S. travel restrictions being imposed (see today’s news).
- Whenever possible, administrative meetings should be reduced or conducted remotely.

Quite simply, all of us here at South Texas care about our community – and I am confident that we will come through this challenge stronger and more united – just as Houston came through Hurricane Harvey a few years ago. But, we can do that only if we all come together and are prudent. Even one individual traveling to a high-risk location or one person failing to self-quarantine puts some 1,200 members of our community – as well as their families – at risk.

Please do not minimize this issue. I take the safety of our community very, very seriously. Regrettably, this virus can be life-threatening – particularly for those members of our community who are more vulnerable or who have compromised immune systems (or who care for such individuals).

We, as attorneys, are fiduciaries who owe duties to others. We put the best interests of others ahead of ourselves. This has to be one of those situations. **I implore you: Do not put yourself, your families, or your colleagues at risk.**

Thank you for your patience as all of us adapt to a very changed world. I commit to you that we will continue to monitor the situation and update the community as soon as things change. And, we are here to assist. If you have questions, please send them to health@stcl.edu.

I will provide another update Friday – unless circumstance warrant sooner.

Please be safe – and prudent, and I will look forward to seeing you soon.