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From the Provost: COVID-19 Preparations, March 3, 2020

University of Northern Iowa

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University of Northern Iowa

From the Provost: COVID-19 Preparations

Dear Colleagues,

As you are aware, the COVID-19 virus is a topic of growing concern and is forefront in the public mind. Although the virus currently poses a minimal threat to the University of Northern Iowa with no reported cases in Iowa, it is incumbent on us to be prepared for any eventuality that might occur. We have convened a task force, with strong Academic Affairs representation, that will be coordinating our efforts and communicating regularly with the campus community. I want to share additional information with you regarding our work in Academic Affairs and ask for your help as we begin considering what this might mean for our faculty and students.

Although there remains little threat in Iowa from COVID-19, we have taken steps to protect students, staff, and faculty. In January we began restricting university sponsored travel to impacted countries, and we continue to monitor and expand that moratorium as more information becomes available. Last week we recalled students on study abroad trips in South Korea and Italy, and we are working now with those students to ensure the disruption does not impact their progress toward graduation. We have also recalled or transferred students in the Camp Adventure program away from impacted countries.

As we monitor the rapidly evolving situation, we are beginning to prepare for the unlikely event that the spread of the virus could impact our campus operations. While such an impact could take a variety of forms, one of the more extreme impacts could be the need to close campus to a physical presence. Should our normal operations be disrupted, our most basic principles will be to protect the safety of our community and to provide our students with a continuity of instruction to the best of our ability. These principles must guide our decision-making process as we move forward.

Should the virus affect our operations in the near term, our goal must be to finish the current semester as effectively as possible and to maintain our students' progress toward graduation. Your deans and department heads will be sharing more information in the coming days, and we ask that each of you begin thinking about how you can meet this goal in each of the classes you teach or the responsibilities you oversee. This will mean different things for each course and will require flexibility and adaptability on everyone's part.

For both the near term and the far term, Information Technology and Distance and Continuing Education are proactively working on resources to support faculty in making a potential shift to the remote delivery of instruction. This includes expansion of services, support for course-specific software needs, and resources for multiple forms of remote delivery. We will also be putting together a suite of faculty professional

development opportunities which we hope to launch around spring break and run through the end of the semester and into the summer. More information will be coming soon to provide details on these resources. I am asking that conversations begin in the departments and colleges about your needs so that ideas can be brought to Deans' Council.

Again, there is no immediate concern at this time. No decisions have been made regarding exactly how we will respond and none of our activities are being impacted outside of international travel. At this time we are closely monitoring the situation and proactively planning how we might respond if needed. We also recognize that this event gives us an opportunity to generally become more prepared for any situation that might disrupt our normal operations. This is a reminder that we should be continually preparing to provide our students with the best education possible under a variety of circumstances.

If you have questions, please let me know.

Thank you,

Jim