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Dear Staff,

As President Lamkin announced yesterday, Westminster College offices will remain closed through April 24 and tentatively will reopen on April 27 out of national and state concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19. The closure also takes into consideration parental responsibilities during the shuttering of area schools. With these issues in mind, Human Resources has put together the following information concerning both the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and working remotely. We urge you to review this information carefully and reach out to your supervisor or our department if you need more information.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act

Effective April 1, 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) is a federal law that will require employers to facilitate two major benefits. Under the new law, most employees must be given:

- Up to two weeks of emergency paid sick leave (EPSL) for illness, quarantine, or school closures related to COVID-19.
- Up to 12 weeks of leave under the Emergency Family Medical Leave Act (EFMLA) for the care of children during school closures related to COVID-19, most of which must be paid. A few exceptions apply.

Contact your supervisor and Human Resources if you meet any of the following criteria:

- You are subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19.
- You have been advised by a health-care provider to self-quarantine as a result of concerns related to COVID-19.
- You are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a medical diagnosis.
- You are caring for an individual who is subject to either Number 1 or 2 above.
- You or a family member living with you have chronic health conditions or are in another at-risk group considered more susceptible to complications associated with COVID-19 (in such a situation, you may be reassigned to remote duties or released from your duties; in either situation, regular pay should be used to record your absence).
- You are sick for non-COVID-19 reasons (sick pay should be used to record your absence).

Please feel free to refer to the following resources with regard to the FFCRA:

- [Department of Labor website](#)
- [FFCRA flier that outlines employee rights and extended family and medical leave under FFCRA](#)
- [FMLA Leave Expansion and Emergency Paid Sick Leave Policy \(COVID-19\)](#)

In light of the extended campus office closures through April 24, here are some reminders and helpful information.

Your supervisor has likely already provided guidance on whether your position needs to report to campus to complete tasks, whether your work can be completed remotely, whether the work might be a mix of reporting to campus and working remotely, or whether you are not required to work through April 24 (unless otherwise extended). **Regardless of the category your duties fall within, you will remain in full paid status.**

Yes. If you are among those authorized to report to campus and you fall under any of the following scenarios, please contact your supervisor immediately to advise them of your situation, and **do not report to campus**:

- You are subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID–19.
- You have been advised by a health-care provider to self-quarantine as a result of concerns related to COVID–19.
- You are experiencing symptoms of COVID–19 and seeking a medical diagnosis.
- You are caring for an individual who is subject to either Number 1 or 2 above.
- You or a family member living with you have chronic health conditions or are in another at-risk group that is considered more susceptible to complications associated with COVID-19 (in such situation you may be reassigned to remote duties or released from your duties; in either situation, regular pay should be used to record your absence).
- You are sick for non-COVID-19 reasons (sick pay should be used to record your absence).

Can I take leave instead of working remotely?

While the campus is closed, our students still need every member of the Westminster family to perform their duties to ensure students succeed. Faculty and staff are expected to work remotely unless:

- Your position has not been designated to work remotely or on campus, in which case the College will continue to pay your weekly wages while campus is closed.
- You are among those authorized to work on campus. In such case, you will report to work on campus.
- You have been advised to self-isolate or quarantine because of travel or potential exposure (regular pay should be used to record your absence).
- You are sick (sick time should be used to record your absence).

Guidelines for expectations for employees and their supervisors while working remotely:

- Communicate the hours of work the employee will be performing if different than hours worked on campus.
- Set expectations regarding reachability and productivity. Office phone calls may be forwarded to your cell phone by following the Department of Information Technology's guide [here](#). If you are not forwarding your phone calls, please be sure to have an “out of office” voicemail message so people know the best way to reach you.
- See additional Payroll and Benefits information [here](#).
- Set regular check-ins.

Because everyone is facing different challenges, use the following best practices while working from home:

1. Set a designated work area: Though this may seem trivial, choosing a spot in your home that is designated for working from home is an important step you can take to set yourself up for success. Choose a spot that you can work from every day that you are working from home. This could be spare bedroom that you've turned into a home office, a desk located in the corner of the living room, or even the dining room table. However, you should try to stay away from working in your bed or on the couch, as these areas are associated with relaxation in your brain, which could negatively impact your productivity. Make sure your work space functions efficiently for you and your work style. Treat your home work area as you would an office cubicle. Make your work space a place you enjoy going to each day, where you can focus and do your best work.
2. Plan and test communications: To ensure that you aren't left out of the loop, make sure to schedule regular meetings and communications with your team, supervisors, and managers. It can be easy to feel disconnected with what's going on in the office, so remaining engaged with your co-workers is key. Communications can include the following: virtual meetings, phone calls, instant messaging, or regular emails. Of course, make sure that your communication method of choice functions properly. If you are working from home and having issues with any electronics hardware or software, contact

3. Dress like you're going to work in the office: The way you dress has been proven to affect you psychologically. This means that although it may sound like a great idea to work from home in your pajamas, in reality, it isn't. While you do not need to dress up in formal business attire if you are working from home, you should take the time to shower, brush your teeth, and get ready for the day. Aim to dress in casual — not sloppy — attire.
4. Avoid distractions and stay on task: One big challenge of telecommuting is accountability. Without co-workers or supervisors nearby, it's easy to become distracted and fall behind on work. Stay focused on work throughout the day to maintain consistent productivity. Avoid online distractions as well. Limit the time spent on email, social media, and websites unrelated to work. Set a timer on your phone or computer if necessary.
5. Remember to take breaks when you need to: Just like you are encouraged to take breaks while you're in the office, remember to allow yourself time throughout the day for quick breaks. If you need a short break to gather your thoughts, try walking around the house or down the street, stretching, or making a snack or meal. If you need to take a longer break or socialize, plan time in your schedule for this (keep in mind to continue practicing social distancing). A major advantage of working from home is having flexibility. Before you take an hour or two out of your day, though, make sure to communicate and check with your supervisor.

If you still have questions about FFCRA or working remotely, please contact your supervisor, and together determine a plan for how you could complete your work duties. Keep in mind that we are all working diligently during this transition, and in many cases, not everything will run smoothly in a remote setting, and the College recognizes that. If you have further questions, please feel free to reach out to Human Resources.

Sincerely,

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