

## WSU COVID-19 Town Hall – April 10

PHIL WEILER: When we did this two weeks ago, we had more than 5,000 people who participated at one point or another. We're anticipating a good response this time around. Want to welcome people from all of our campuses-- Everett, Spokane, Tri-Cities, Vancouver, Pullman, and, of course, our Global Campus as well.

So I'm joined today by Washington State University President Kirk Schultz, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President, Bryan Slinker, our Vice President for Student Affairs, Mary Jo Gonzales, our Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer, Theresa Elliot-Cheslek, and a new participant with us today is Vice President for Finance and Administration, Stacy Pearson. So thank you all for you for joining us.

Before we get started, let me just lay out what the next hour will look like. As we did two weeks ago, we would like to do this as an informal Q&A. We did solicit questions online before we got started today. We have well over 200 questions that have been submitted, so that's wonderful. We also welcome questions live in the comments section of our YouTube feed. So if you have questions, feel free to put them there.

We had a very robust set of conversations going on two weeks ago. There were probably hundreds of comments. There were more questions than we were able to get to two weeks ago, so we went through and actually pulled all the questions out, found answers to those, and posted those on the WSU COVID-19 website.

I mention that because we will do the same this time around as well. If your question doesn't get answered, we will try and pull that out of the stream and get the answers posted. I would encourage you to take a look at the WSU COVID-19 website. If you have any questions about what our response has been, that website includes all of our communications, system-wide, going all the way back to January, which feels like a lifetime ago to me. But I'll talk more about the website at the end.

We have a new feature that I'm actually very excited about. We've recruited a cadre of subject matter experts who will help us try and answer some of those questions in the YouTube comments live. There were so many comments last time around. Like I said, we didn't have a chance to get to them all. I want to introduce and thank those folks who are joining us as those subject matter experts.

From the international programs group, Cheryl Camersol is with us, from information technology services, Jacqueline Southwick, from human resource services, we have Lisa Gerring and Kendra Wilkins-Faukna, from the provost's office, Craig Parks, from student affairs Jill Crayton, Matthew Jeffries, from facility services, Craig Cole, and from financing administration, Vicki Murray and Matt Skinner.

So that group has their own Zoom hang out that they are in the process of setting up, so they can communicate with each other live and make sure that the right people are answering those questions in the comments. So please take advantage of that. With that, let me turn it over to President Schulz, and we can get started.

KIRK SCHULZ: Well, happy Friday, Cougs. I appreciate everybody joining us today from all across the WSU system. I thought our first COVID town hall two weeks ago went well. It was great to see the number of people that participated, and it's awesome to see the questions and things that are coming in. Just a couple of quick points-- I want to remind our faculty, staff, and students that are engaged in watching this to make sure that you take a little bit of a Zoom break every now and then.

I remind our leaders when I talk to them that I know we're busy. We all have lots of stuff we're doing. It's a stressful time for many of us and many of our families. But please make sure you give yourself a break, go out, take a walk, do something else, get away from the computer screens and social media for some period of time. I think it's healthier for all of us.

Secondly, just, once again, want to commend our faculty for the exceptional job that they continue to do moving those classes online in a short period of time. And as I've talked to our deans and other people this week, I'm really impressed with how smoothly that has gone. To our staff, I know many of you are balancing lots of different things in Pullman and other communities.

I appreciate all the work our staff do to support our students during this really critical time. And finally, to our students-- and I've heard from many of you on social media-- thank you for being flexible. Thank you for your feedback. Sometimes it's positive. Sometimes it's not positive. But we can't get better if we don't hear the things that you're experiencing. So continue to send those things our direction.

And every two weeks, we're going to continue to do these town hall forums as long as people are interested and try and make sure we always work our way through the questions you have. A final reminder though-- there are still a lot of uncertainties out there, whether it's budget around the university, financial impacts, what's going to happen in the fall, and so forth. And we just don't know.

We're not hiding those things. We just don't know where they are. So continue to ask us those questions, but understand there are some times we're just going to have to say we're not sure, and we're going to do the best we can to get you the best information when we have it. So look forward to visiting with you all and my colleagues. And once again, thank you, Cougar Nation for all that you're doing for us right now.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you, Kirk. So, Bryan, I accepted the first question for you. I know that we are now three weeks into distance learning. I also know that you talk with the deans on a

daily basis. Any feedback that you're receiving from the deans and from faculty on from their perspective how things are going, or for that matter, from the student perspective?

BRYAN SLINKER: As Kirk said, it seems to be going relatively smoothly, that's not to say that every experience is fantastic. The faculty have really stepped up here at AOI to get prepared to do this. So it's gone better than we would have expected. And we learn. We're now definitely two weeks into this and-- or three weeks now, and it's gone relatively well. We want to still hear when it doesn't go as well so that we can continue to improve on the fly and get ready to improve this experience.

I asked the deans yesterday actually what they were hearing from their faculty and students. And the vast majority of students from the perception of the faculty are engaged fully in their experience going to distance education. Those that are a little bit less engaged, which is a minority, are still keeping up with their work. And we're still worried that there are some students that are unable to engage. So we have a loaner program for Chromebooks.

And we're in the final stages of rolling out a program for Wi-Fi access as well. We have about 900 students who've expressed interest in a Wi-Fi hotspot. And we will start getting those rolled out as quickly as we can to address that need where we can. The other thing that students should know is that they should have parking lot access to Wi-Fi at any WSU county extension office.

And if they can get near another university, they should be able to access Wi-Fi with edu [? realms, ?] so we're still continuing to develop those tools to support the students. But the engagement from the students has been really strong. And the experiences have mostly been good.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. Theresa, I've got the next question I want to send to you. I know talking with one of my staff people that when the governor announced that K through 12 classes would not resume in the spring, that was kind of a blow for them. They are trying to manage a household. They're trying to manage their job working at home plus trying to educate their kids. And it's a very significant burden. I'm just curious what are you hearing from employees? How are they handling this? Are there resources that they should be thinking about if they need additional help as we try and manage the situation?

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: Yeah, great question. So with that directive from the governor, there was also some leave options available. So if an employee has questions on work assignments, hours that they're working, they can either contact HRS or work with their supervisor directly. There's all kinds of options available to modify hours of work, if when the kids are sleeping, or whatever works for them, coming into the office if that's a possibility. But reaching out to HR if they do have concerns with balancing that workload. But keep in mind, what I would say to the employees is that there are leave options available for impacts due to COVID-19 and, in some cases, due to the K through 12. So again, go to our website or contact us, and we can help guide you through those processes.

Two other things I want to highlight that HR is doing on a weekly basis is we have info sessions on work and leave options. And over these last few weeks, we've had over 900 employees participate in those sessions. Those are very similar to the forum that we're doing now, where questions can be asked and answered in real time from the subject matter experts in HR.

So I'd encourage employees to take advantage of that. The other thing is every day at 10:00 AM, we have what we're calling a daily Cougar connect. And we've had six sessions with over 600 faculty and staff participating. I want to highlight that because our presenters are from throughout the WSU system-- experts in well-being, exercise, other tips and tricks. So that's another great resource for information for all of our employees-- 10:00 AM, weekdays. Thanks.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. On behalf of my staff team, we want to say thank you to the folks in Human Resource Services. It's good to know that we have real professionals backing us up and supporting us during this time. Stacy, I want to direct the next question to you. We know that there are going to be fiscal impacts from COVID-19. I think it's probably too early to really know what those will look like, but I'm curious from a finance and administration perspective, what kind of work is being done to identify scenarios and begin some financial planning?

STACY PEARSON: Yes, thank you, Phil. And thank you, to everybody who has participated in helping us work out on all of these issues. So I would start with the fact that just a reminder to the communities that we are on the third year of our fiscal recovery plan. And for the first time, for the year ending fiscal year 19, we went into a positive operating budget situation in which our revenues exceeded our expenditures. So that is excellent news. And certainly, it puts us in a better position as we look ahead to what is happening with COVID-19.

What I would say is that we should expect that we will continue a process. So this being the third year, we'll be looking at the fourth year in which we already implemented many of these processes to manage our expenses as well as our revenues. And we'll continue that into the future.

In addition, what we are trying to do is work very closely with sister institutions in the state of Washington, our government relations folks also, to find out what is going on in the state-- anything related to state budgets, anything related to federal programs like the CARES Act and looking at those impacts. Obviously, we don't know yet, but we're tracking those very carefully.

And then we're doing what any good finance and administration office should do, is we're starting to model scenarios. So we're thinking about, certainly, when we made the decision to go online in summer, we are modeling those scenarios, both in terms of the academic programming as well as the impact on our facilities and what facilities will be open and those types of things. So I'm sure that there are many questions about what happens in fall. And it's a different situation if we are online and if we are not.

But meanwhile, we are tracking what is happening in our admissions office as well as at institutions like other Pac-12s, other Western universities, and we're on the listservs where we're talking about what are some of the plans that others are doing? What scenarios are they modeling? For example, international student enrollment or non-resident student enrollment. And so we're doing a range of analyses on that. Certainly we will be impacted in the fall if our enrollments decline. But we're watching for, quote, "all sources of revenues"-- what will be happening with federal grants.

And then we're being very mindful looking very carefully at our tuition policies, tuitions and fees, and what we might do for the future there also. So we're really taking into account all revenue sources, all expenditures. Certainly looking in the past to when we went through the recession or some of those tools. We're looking back at some of those tools and methods that we used for that.

What might be different now? Well, let me tell you one is not very many people are traveling. So travel expenses are certainly down, and we can account for that. So like I said, everything is on the table. We're looking at that, and as we get new information, we're trying to communicate out to others.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. So Mary Jo, I know that in addition to financial planning, there's a lot of other planning going on and a number of groups that have been formed. Can you share with us what are the issues those groups are looking at, and what kinds of decisions might we see in the future?

MARY JO GONZALES: Absolutely. Hello, Cougs. It's Friday after-- it's Friday morning. I want to let you know that we're all thinking about you. As Kirk mentioned, we are all paying attention to what's happening in your world and what's going on. So please continue to reach out. Phil, in particular, I think students-- I happened to meet with our student government counsel yesterday. That has all the ASWSU leadership from all of our campuses.

And one of the major issues that came up about is the issues that students are facing around just being able to pay the basic bills. Their worried about child care just like our staff are. Many of our students have families. And so they are trying to manage educating their school-age children and maintain their jobs as well as finish coursework.

And so I want to let you know exactly what I shared with them is that we are working hard on our student emergency fund. And if you are struggling, it is really important that you reach out. Go to the dean of students website, and that's deanofstudents.wsu.edu, where you can apply for emergency aid. In some cases we are able to turn that around very quickly and get you the support and the finances that you need.

Additionally, the federal government has released a lot of information about how we're able to support students with its new grant policy. And so we have a small group that-- Phil that's one of the groups that we have experts from around the campuses starting to work on is how do we

get that aid to students in their hands? It truly is about getting cash to students when they need it. And we know that's happening now. It covers technology, child care, housing, food-- all of those things that we need to help you get across that stage at graduation and, actually, to continue to next year if you're coming back to WSU.

Some of the other groups that we have working on both Bryan and Stacy alluded to. It's about petitions, about students who are struggling through emergency situations. We are also looking at summer programs and activities because we know about a lot of activities-- including Alive, summer camps, bridge programs-- are being impacted by COVID-19 and the unknown. And really want to reiterate the message that Kirk said, is there's a lot of unknowns right now.

So those groups will continue to meet and continue to work. There is a large question out there, and I'm going to repeat it again, is that April 30 is the day that we will share our information about fees and activities. And the reason why we are taking the time to do what we need to do is we have students and staff on those salary lines as well as making sure that those buildings are available for Cougs in the future. And so we are looking very hard at that. And I want to thank all of our team members, faculty, staff, and students who are participating in those discussions and giving us the feedback we need to make the right decisions at the right time.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. Kirk, I'm going to ask you an unfair question, but this is a question a lot of people have. Do you think we'll be able to be going back to face-to-face instruction in the fall?

KIRK SCHULZ: Absolutely, Phil. Thanks for the question. And I just-- I believe that we will be back to face-to-face instruction in the fall. I think we're seeing in Washington state some flattening of our curve. I want to remind everybody it is not even mid-April yet, and I think some people are very concerned about what was going to happen in August and September. We share that concern, and we will certainly not do anything that's contrary to what public health officials, the governor, other people are recommending.

But at this particular point, I'm planning-- and I think my colleagues here on the leadership team are planning-- for us to be back in in-person sessions in the fall. I expect us to make sure that we're doing what we need to to ensure appropriate social distancing and some other types of things. So will it look exactly like it did in January and February in the fall? Probably not. But I think our Cougs, our incoming students, our returning students, our faculty and staff should plan on in-person instruction and in-person interactions across all of our campuses in the fall semester.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. Bryan, I'm going to come back to you. One of the things we did talk about two weeks ago was our pass/fail policy, but that continues to be an area of concern for students. We still have seen a lot of questions online about pass/fail. What I would ask if you, I guess, is when the students need to make a decision about whether they want to take a

letter grade or pass/fail, what things do they need to keep in mind as they make that decision, and is there any help as they try and decide what the best choice is for them?

BRYAN SLINKER: Well, thanks, Phil. I'll start with your last sub question, is there help? Absolutely, there's help in making the decision. And the main help is their academic advisor. It's not a decision to be made lightly. And the academic advisors are in the best position to guide them through the different possible scenarios of do I take a letter grade? Do I take the pass grade? Depending on what the next steps for them are.

In terms of the decision, we purposefully extended the request deadline to June 1, so that students would know what letter grade they received before they had to make the final determination on whether it was pass/fail. So yes, for those who are questioning, will I know what my letter grade is before requesting pass/fail? The answer's yes. We haven't made the final decision yet, but because of the switch to distance and the extra attention to try to get students through here to the finish line, we're likely to extend the deadline for when final grades are due by a week.

That's still mid-May, so that the students should be able to know their grade a couple of weeks before they have the final deadline for making the decision. And that's really important. And I just want to emphasize we want to get you across the finish line here in the best possible way. And your academic advisor is the best resource for you as a student to help make that decision.

There's a lot of support out there for you. You know where you want to go. And whether it's a specific advisor for a health science program or your academic program, reach out to those advisors who know you and know what your goals are and can help you make the best decision in that framework.

PHIL WEILER: So just to follow up. Is there any reason why a student wouldn't want to just make everything pass/fail for the semester?

BRYAN SLINKER: I mean, each circumstance is very different, obviously. But those students I think that are most concerned about letter grade versus pass grade are those that may be thinking they're applying to graduate school or to a professional school, a medical school, a veterinary school, where their GPA is often used as admission criteria. They need to know the schools they're applying to. And began, their advisors can help them walk through that.

I think we're all going to have to count on it, even with NWSU, we're going to have to count on that everybody understands this is a disruptive end of a semester and that whether it's WSU admitting students in the future coming out of high school that's disrupted in their senior year or it's our students graduating into going on to other schooling that they might want to do, we're going to have to all count on the next step, understanding the disruptions and taking that into account in a more holistic approach toward admissions going forward. But again, it's all linked, of course, to a GPA. And students need to talk through with their advisors if they think they're going to be limiting their option if they take the pass grade or the letter grade.

PHIL WEILER: All right. So the takeaway I'm hearing is check with your advisor before you make any decisions, because there could be negative consequences if you're not being careful.

BRYAN SLINKER: Right, just have to think it through, and advisor's the best thought partner.

PHIL WEILER: Perfect. OK, thank you. So Theresa, next question I want to send to you. I know there's a lot of anxiety across the country and, quite frankly, around the world with regard to the seizing up of our economy and the impact on people's jobs and people's incomes. We saw a lot of questions from faculty and staff asking about what does the future hold for the possibility of layoffs or early retirements or furloughs? I imagine it's too early for us to tell, but I just wondered if you have any information, you can share about those.

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: Yeah, and-- yeah, you're exactly right. It's a little too early to know. As Stacy and Kirk both said, we're looking closely at the budget and trying to evaluate and make some decisions of what may be happening, but we don't know right now. But I do know, employees, it's hard when there's so much uncertainty. So anybody who wants to know what is the process if I was impacted in some way? We have that information on our website.

So you can go out there and look or you can contact HR just to say, hey, I'm a AP employee, I'm civil service, I'm just concerned, I'm interested in what that process is. Keep in mind, that's out there all the time. And that information might help you at least know there is a process in place. Here's what it is. And so that's what I would recommend for anyone who's concerned at the moment. But I do know we're working really hard to try to make those decisions, and we will get that information out as soon as we know what those impacts are going to be. I saw Kirk raising his hand.

PHIL WEILER: Yeah, Kirk, did you want to add something?

KIRK SCHULZ: Yes, I think because of the nature of our economy in the state and nation right now, people are appropriately scared and worried about their jobs, their position at the University regardless of campus location. Just a couple of things-- please remember that rumors and things that you hear from somebody, it's really important that check with supervisors, check with deans, vice presidents, chancellors and find out if there's any truth to those. I think that's really important.

The second thing is I know my colleagues here are all working to make sure we do every everything we can to preserve jobs and employment at all of our campuses, whether that's our students, whether that's full-time staff, part-time staff, our faculty. So that's not the first thing that we're talking about when we talk about any sort of budget challenges. Will there be layoffs in the future? Will there be workforce reductions? Right now, we simply don't know.

And I want to emphasize, again, this is not us knowing something and not wanting to share that. We don't know what the federal stimulus package is going to do for us. We don't know what the final impacts are on the state budget. And so we will keep everybody informed, but I



just want to make sure we reassure folks one of our priorities-- our chief priority-- is making sure we preserve as many of those jobs that are so important to our Cougs as possible.

PHIL WEILER: Thank you. Stacey, a question for you. This was something that came up a number of times. I was actually a little surprised to see it how often it came up in the online questions that people submitted. But a number of staff members are able to get tuition waivers for in-person classes that they take. Now that during the summer session we are moving to distance learning, people are wondering, will those waivers still be available, and what changes can staff expect?

STACY PEARSON: Yes, Phil, thank you. So the current policy regarding staff tuition waivers for summer session on each campus does remain in effect. If you are eligible for a staff tuition waiver-- I'm sorry-- faculty staff tuition waiver for a WSU summer course at a physical campus location, regardless of how the course is delivered, you do remain eligible for the waiver.

For example, if the course is listed on the Pullman campus schedule of classes and is being delivered via distance technology due to COVID-19, you are still eligible for that staff tuition waiver. As with past summer sessions, faculty staff are not eligible for tuition fee waivers for Global Campus sections in accordance with our current policy. So really, the difference here is if the delivery method changed, the waiver policy did not change.

PHIL WEILER: OK, and Theresa, did you have something you wanted to add to that question, or was there another question?

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESEK: Yeah, I saw that there were a couple of questions that came through asking if HR is available to verify the employee's tuition waiver, and the answer is yes. And those can be sent via email. We do have staff in the office. We're available to get those signed, so you can proceed through with your class.

PHIL WEILER: Terrific. Thank you. Mary Jo, a lot of questions that I saw before hand and actually now as I'm watching the live chat as well-- still having questions about housing fees and the residential dining fees. I know we discussed that a little bit two weeks ago, but still, there are questions out there. Can you just remind folks what the policy is around refunds for housing and dining?

MARY JO GONZALES: Absolutely. So I'm going to encourage you to go to [housing.wsu.edu](https://housing.wsu.edu). Today is the day that we requested that students who have apartments with us or live in residence halls submit a form that tell us what they would like to do. They have an option between a refund or a credit for their housing fees. And they also have the option of RDA into our Cougs Feeding Cougs program. So there are plenty of options for you to pick from. But today is the day that we're asking for that information from you.

You will, in the next couple of days-- and some of our students who filled this survey out very early have started receiving emails about next steps. Some of those next steps are pretty easy,

like choosing to terminate the contract. Some of those other next steps, like when we're going to be able to move out, will really be dictated by Governor Inslee and the Stay Home, Stay Healthy order. That will not be lifted until May 4, and we do know that we have students who are concerned about that.

I can assure you that those apartments and residence halls are staying put. Nobody is doing anything with them except in extreme cases. And that is when students call us and let us know that, hey, they have medical supplies that they need to come pick up. So they can pick up their medical supplies, and they're leaving the remainder of their items here.

So I want to assure you that we will let you know, and we will communicate as soon as we have more information about the move-out process. But again, today is the day. Go to [housing.wsu.edu](http://housing.wsu.edu). And that will allow you to fill out the survey. You don't need to fill it out more than once. One time is good enough. And again, those emails will follow up. And it really gives a detailed example of when to send in your keys, or what does it look like, the process of moving forward. But those emails should be going out, or have been going out, and will continue to go out as students get that information.

Students will be receiving refunds. It could be up to three to four weeks. We want to let you know it's a little bit of a process. Please make sure to get your direct deposits filled out with the bursar's office so that they will know exactly where, whether you want it sent via check or whether you want it deposited into your checking account. So the critical information there-- please fill out that survey is the only thing that I can say.

I do want to address, really quickly, some off-campus housing questions. We've had a lot of our fraternity and sorority life parents and families as well as those living in apartments-- please talk with your landlords. Please let them know what financial situation you're in. Also, don't hesitate to reach out to the housing corporations or the national fraternities and sororities if you need additional information. Unfortunately, WSU does not manage those properties. But we are in contact and communicating and saying that they should be as flexible as possible, given the current circumstance that we're dealing with COVID-19.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. That last item was another thing that we saw quite a bit from people who lived off campus and just really weren't sure what options they had available. So thanks for sharing that. Kirk, I know two weeks ago when we did our last town hall, we did talk about commencement and what your plans were, what the plans are for the system. We still are hearing those questions. So it might be a good opportunity for us to remind folks what the plans are for both May and in August.

KIRK SCHULZ: Yeah, thank you, Phil. Just as a reminder to all the Cougs and Cougar families out there, we recognize-- the leadership team recognizes that not having that in-person commencement in May is just a severe disappointment to so many families, so many students, some a first-generation students, people getting that PhD and wanting to have family from all over the world come in and celebrate.

That being said, we just felt the right thing to do was to ensure we had a celebration in May. And I think sometimes, we've used language that suggests that we're going to do a live-stream commencement type of ceremony that might be several hours long. What we're going to do is about a 45-minute graduation celebration working with our students. And I'm going to ask you in just a minute, since that's in your area to talk a little bit about what that could look like.

And as a reminder, in August, many of our campus locations have elected certain dates when they're going to do postponed but in-person commencement ceremonies. I did see some questions in advance that there is some frustration with people saying, well what about this particular campus, and how come they haven't scheduled that yet? It's interfering with our plans. We need to know.

We will work with all our campus locations to ensure that those in-person commencement celebrations scheduled for August are all there as soon as practically possible. I would remind the Cougs out there that those in the hospitality industry and others-- there is still a lot of uncertainty around scheduling any events with particular locations and things like that. So people sometimes feel, well, how come somebody just doesn't make a decision on it? We don't want to announce a commencement for any campus at a date and find out that we do not have a suitable location to do that.

So that's what's taking the extra time. So Phil, it's appropriate for me to turn the tables now a little bit as vice president for marketing communications. The commencement staff reports to you. And tell us a little bit about maybe what, exactly, people are thinking about for that May 9 celebration.

PHIL WEILER: Sure. So before I jump to May 9, I just want to add something you mentioned about August. All the campuses are working really hard to try and make sure they secure venues for that August event. Many of them have selected dates and have venues, but as you can imagine, the venues that we would use for commencement events are also venues used for concerts and other kinds of activities. And so dates are filling up quickly for the kinds of spaces that we would typically use at all of our campuses for these in-person commencement exercises. So if you've not heard a date from your campus, know that they are working diligently to find the best location on the right date. And they will share that information as quickly as possible.

Now with regard to May 9, that would have been the date that most of our campuses had their in-person event. As Kirk mentioned, we don't want that day to go by without recognizing the accomplishments of our students. You know, as the president said, this is a four-year, or five-year, or six-year effort depending on what kind of a degree you're getting. We need to recognize that. And so we're going to do something different.

As he said, it is not going to be a typical commencement exercise. It's going to be much more of a celebration. We're asking students to provide content in the way of very short videos, photos, remembrances of what their time in Washington State University was like. We want this to be

focused on the students. We want them to be able to see themselves and not necessarily have administrators or other leaders who they may not know as well taking the time to share remarks.

So we really want this to be student-focused. One thing I will note is we are asking students to register-- let us know what their plans are for both May and August. We'd like them to do that by tomorrow. You should have received emails earlier in the month. [PHONE RINGING] Excuse me. You should have received emails earlier in the month asking you to fill that out. If you haven't done it yet, please do that today or tomorrow because we want to know what your availability is going to be like.

And I think it's going to be a fun event in May. I would encourage you to have your family members connect virtually. We'll have a tag wall where people can be posting comments live, and so look forward to more information as the semester winds down. So thank you. Make sure you fill out the form if you haven't done it. And we'll have a good time in May.

Let me move now to Bryan. I'm going to read this question, because I thought it was very heartfelt. It says, "I have added responsibilities at work due to COVID. I have five children who have been pulled out of school, and I'm working full-time at home due to social distancing. I'm concerned enough regarding my student workload that I wish to remove myself from the current course that I'm enrolled in. Will there be a grace for late withdrawals for students who just feel like they can't complete a particular course?"

I know you talked a little bit about pass/fail. Can you tell us a little bit about what is the process for someone who feels like they may need to withdraw from a course.

**BRYAN SLINKER:** So it's a bit of a staged or complicated response. But those situations are-- those are students we really want to help. And we want to help all of our students get across the finish line. For those students that truly believe they cannot finish-- first, I would ask you to, again, talk with your advisor. Talk with your faculty members, and see if there is a way, a strategy you can extend the time period of your studies, incomplete grades, or X-grades. There may not be, but please, please check to see if there is a strategy that you can extend the time to complete some of your work.

If you fail to find that strategy working with your advisor or the faculty, we have extended the withdrawal deadline. And so you can make the decision later if you are able to do so as you try to develop the strategy. You don't have to make the decision as early. If you do make the decision to withdraw, then we would direct you to the petition process for potential refund of tuition.

We know that everybody's circumstance is different. We know that we have to be as flexible as possible. And we want you to engage with your advisors, engage with the instructors. Try to get across that finish line. Let us know what you need. Let us know what would help you. And if at the end of the day, you don't see it working, then we've liberalized the withdrawal time frames.

And we'll work with you through the petition process when it comes to that. But again, I know everybody's circumstances are different. But please, please work with your team that's going to try to help you get across that line. I see Mary Jo also would like to add something to that answer as well.

MARY JO GONZALES: Yeah, so one of the things that I'm going to remind all of us during this time of great uncertainty-- and I'm filling it too. Use these three words-- I need help. And it's really important that you say those words because Cougs help Cougs, and that's who we are.

One of the things that you ought to know is that many of the services like counseling and psychological services, Cougar Health Services, even the services that are health services that are provided on all of our campuses are moving to telehealth. So if it is around stress, anxiety, reach out for help, and tell us what you're looking for. And so all of our campuses are doing some form food pantry delivery, meaning that we can get you groceries, in a way and quickly, so that your family and you are eating.

Many of our student employment opportunities have went remotely, except for those who physically need to be on campus. So if you can do remote work and continue providing that. But the Academic Success Center has academic success coaches that are also able to sit there and work you through a tutoring schedule, stress management. All of the support that you would need is now remote. I know it doesn't look or feel the same as the in-person, but more than ever, it's really important to reach out and ask for help and engage with people who really are there to support and provide and get you through a really tough semester and, frankly, a really tough time for all of us.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. Theresa, one of the questions that we've seen from faculty and staff have to do with, again, the fact that our K through 12 in the state of Washington is not going to be returning to the classroom. There's the possibility that WSU may return to a more normal work schedule prior to the end of the academic year for the K through 12 students. And there's a question about telework agreements. Are we willing to extend those, or what kind of leave options might be available?

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: Yeah, and when the modifications are made to the Stay Home, Stay Safe directive, we'll, of course, adhere to whatever those rules are. But if, for some reason, WSU is back in session before the school is out time frame, employees should be working with their supervisor on options for continuing teleworking or working at alternative work location or modifications to their schedule. They can contact HR if they have any questions. At that time, we will take a look at that. We'd be encouraging people to be as flexible as possible to accommodate the needs of our employees.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. Stacy, a lot of questions, both as I'm looking at our chat function now and that were pre-submitted would have to do with parking. So some of our campuses sell parking passes. And students and faculty obviously aren't able to use those

parking passes. So people are wondering can they get a refund for their parking? And what would that look like?

STACY PEARSON: Yes, Phil. We have received that question a lot. And actually, it's our current policy is in place is that faculty, staff, students can seek a refund. It's prorated from the time they cancel it, of course. But they're able to do that.

PHIL WEILER: Great. That was easy. Mary Jo, you talked earlier about the Student Emergency Fund. Can you let folks know, if they're in a position to be able to donate to that, how they might contribute?

MARY JO GONZALES: Absolutely. And I have to tell you-- I want to say thank you to all of those Cougars out there who have already donated and given. We're looking at between already 25,000 to 35,000, plus, who've already given to help our Cougars. And so all you need to go to is the WSU foundation webpage. And you will find Cougs Help Cougs. What is great there is there is variety of ways that you can give. Every penny helps. But again, that is a way to give back to the Cougar community if you're able.

Now if you need help, that's when you go to the student websites, and definitely, we're here. What I love is that I've been watching Facebook. The Cougar community is really showing up for one another during COVID-19. I'm seeing Cougs who are putting masks on with Coug gear but also saying shout-outs and props to all of our nurses, and all of our doctors, all of our teachers and social workers, and everyone in Coug Nation who is really fighting hard-- not just for Washington State, frankly, but for the nation and for the world. And so just want to say thank you for all of that for our entire Cougar family-- not just those on all of our physical campuses but everywhere across the world.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. Kirk, you had announced that you'll be freezing salaries for some of your senior leadership team. We did get a question pre-submitted asking if those salary freezes might extend beyond just your leadership team. I know it's probably too early to tell, but wondering what your thoughts are there.

KIRK SCHULZ: Yeah, the salary freezes are, right now, just for executives at WSU. And we got all kinds of questions around that. So let me attempt to answer a few of those. First, we had a lot of faculty that received promotions, from assistant to associate, associate to full, both tenure and other faculty tracks, and were those part of the hiring freeze? And the answer is no. Those promotion increments are still going to move forward just as we had planned.

We are in discussions with members of the executive team and other highly-compensated folks at WSU about some voluntary salary reductions. And that includes some of our coaches, and athletic director, and me as president, and others. I know there's some people out there who have responded and say, well, that's not enough or things like this. And I would just remind everybody that this is an initial set of decisions that we're making before we have much in the

way of data. And there may be a set of additional reductions for coaches and executives that may come down the road in the next several months as we know where things are.

The other question I got when we talked about freezing executive salaries was-- and this came up with the faculty senate yesterday-- did that mean there were a bunch of scheduled increases that maybe people didn't know about that were going to go into effect? And the answer to that was no. There was no scheduled increases. We just felt it was really prudent, immediately, just to make sure that people understood that we were trying to take this seriously even in very uncertain circumstances. So promotions, things like this that were already underway, those will certainly be honored. And they're well-deserved by our faculty and staff. However, everything else, for the time being, will be frozen moving forward.

PHIL WEILER: Great, OK. Bryan, we've talked a lot about undergraduate students. We have received some questions from graduate students as well. There's one, in particular, that caught my attention. This was from a first-year PhD student. This person was concerned about the qualifying exams for this summer. The person was asking you if there's a plan in place for those exams should the situation extend through the summer if we're not able to be meeting face-to-face. Is anyone working on that question?

BRYAN SLINKER: The simple answer is yes. At WSU, it's those sorts of graduate program progression points, preliminary exams, qualifying exams, final exams are largely under the purview of the graduate program itself. They're all different. I've talked with Dean Gloss about messaging about flexibility around these requirements. And she is definitely going to work with me to message strongly to the graduate programs to introduce flexibility-- delays into the fall, for example, in this case.

We don't have university-wide policies that would dictate blanket changes. What we need to do is-- I'm really committed-- and I know Dr. Gloss is as well-- to communicating with the graduate programs to be as flexible as they can be about rescheduling these things. And I know we're going to stand the exemptions from some of the defense requirements for the spring semester for defending remotely. We're going to extend those through the summer as well, at this point, so that there's more option for defenses. But qualifying and pre-lim-- we're going to have to work with the graduate programs themselves from a philosophy of we need to introduce flexibility.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. So, Theresa, we talked a little bit about issues around the freezes and new hires and things like that. That brings up questions about staff promotions, reclassifications, wondering do we have any information you can share on those issues?

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: Yeah, so currently, the hiring freeze does not impact civil service or AP promotions or reclassifications. Those processes still follow their normal procedures. And that's currently-- they're not impacted.

PHIL WEILER: So a somewhat related question-- this one's a little bit long. But it was from somebody who works in a grant-funded position. This person wanted to confirm that the hiring freeze would not apply to those positions funded by grants. This person's concerned about the research that could continue that would be funded through the grants, whether it's through National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health. Do we know whether these federally-supported positions would be included in that hiring freeze?

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: And this will be a really easy answer. They are not part of the hiring freeze. So the grant positions are not impacted.

PHIL WEILER: Well, good. Thank you. It's nice to have an easy-to-answer question. Stacy, this was an interesting question. And I think it could go to you, and it could go to everybody else as well. But people are wondering what sources of data are being used as we're following COVID-19. How are those sources of information impacting the decision-making process? Can you talk a little bit about the groups that have been working on COVID-19 through the executive policy group and others?

STACY PEARSON: Yes, I think a lot-- as you indicate, a lot of us could answer that. We have developed or assigned multiple task force to work on everything from tuition and fees and a lot of those things. And so as far as what data are we using? We're actually looking at some of-- say, for our own admissions data and comparing it to last year and that type of thing. That is something we do every year, regardless, as we look forward as to how we might estimate the incoming class. We're certainly, in this case, relying on state, national, and federal data when it comes to budget information, when it comes to the interpretation of the CARERS Act, for example. We're pulling that information in working with our colleagues on interpretations.

But in terms of fiscal data and looking at some of the policies and actions that we took from prior actions related to either budget reductions or, you know, other situations, we're relying on the same sets of data there as well as, in my case-- and I'm sure others will speak to this-- I'm working with my colleagues, Pac-12 CFOs, other universities, my professional organizations, those that we work with-- they're giving us quite a bit of data about what's going on around the country as well as tool kits for how we might approach some of the activities. They're also helping with the interpretation of CARERS and other types of information. So we really do have a lot that we can rely on in this case.

MARY JO GONZALES: You know, and, Phil, I would like to add-- you know, there's another piece here is that we are really taking the data and feedback that we're getting from students about their concerns and needs. The Provost office sent out a question about how are you doing related to internet access. We received about between 900 and 1,000 responses. And what students are telling us is they don't have access to internet, or it's not stable, or there's about eight people fighting for the internet signal, and how do we do it?

So we are working on hotspots, Chromebooks-- all of those things that students can utilize to make a difference in getting through to their academic side and academic courses. We're also



doing that here in Pullman. And so we know we have about 800 students who are staying with us. And there was resounding feedback that said students said, hey, I like the Grab N Go, but I just want a hot dog or a hamburger. And so we move to the GetFood app. And now students can pre-order hot food, delivery, pickup-- really important as a part of that strategy to make sure student's needs are being met.

We're also taking a look at, for example, those students who are asking us for emergency funds and saying, what else do you need? What support services are you requiring? Or is it this particular angle that you're struggling with? And so we want to make sure that you know that we're taking that feedback very seriously. We're taking the surveys very seriously, so we know how to provide the services you need to get you and your families through the next several weeks and, again, to finish the semester.

Some people are saying finish the semester strong. I'm saying just finish the semester. Get through it. Do what you have to do. And I joked about TikTok before. I now have an account. It's actually pretty cool to keep playing in that space. But do what you have to do to just get through. Because we know you're filled with a lot of grit and a lot of resilience. You've done a lot to get here. And we know you can make it through the next couple of weeks. And we're here to help you. You're not alone.

PHIL WEILER: Bryan, did you want to add something to that?

BRYAN SLINKER: All right. Yeah, I think also, in terms of-- it's important to emphasize the internal data collection as Mary Jo just did and what we can do to support our faculty, staff, and students. But there's a larger set of data out there. Stacy mentioned other universities, professionals. But we're constantly scanning, and we have pathways into government agencies with our State Department of Commerce, our State Department of Agriculture, the governor's office.

So we're getting data updated almost daily about how the COVID-19's unfolding in the state and the different parts of the state, how the public health response is going. And so those are really important data for us as we think about predicting what's going to happen in the future. And so we just have a rich source of data that changes daily, but it's a rich source of data from external scannings to help us decide internally what the best approaches are for tackling this response together.

PHIL WEILER: We are getting close to the top of the hour. Kirk, is there anything you want to add before we close this out?

KIRK SCHULZ: Well, Cougs, thank you for those of you who've been with us for an hour today. I think we've got through a lot more questions than we did last time. And keep submitting questions. Keep letting us know where you're concerned. Make sure that-- like Mary Jo mentioned, ask for help. We can't solve problems that we don't know exist, so that's faculty,

staff, students, families, alumni-- ask for help, and let us know. Maybe we can't help you, but more often than not, we can find a creative solution.

And then I would say the final thing as we talk to governance groups across campus, and there is a little bit of a national conversation going that university administrations are going to utilize the COVID-19 as a time to pull away from shared governance, from working with our students, our faculty and our staff on managing and leading through our universities through this time. We have no desire to do that at WSU.

As a matter of fact, the only way to come out of this stronger is by working with our faculty, staff, and students together on making these really critical decisions. So I just want to reassure we are not stepping back. We have no intention of stepping back from working with our campus communities on key decisions. And we're going to continue to engage on really tough decisions that we may have ahead of us. We're going to do that with our colleagues together. And I just want to continue to emphasize that. So Phil, my colleagues thank you.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you. Before we close, I want to make a pitch for another opportunity for us to join via Zoom and YouTube. Work continues, despite the fact that we are not in our offices or in the classrooms. That's obvious.

One of the things that we've continued to be to be working on is the recruitment and selection of a new permanent Provost. We have limited, narrowed the pool down to four finalists. And each of those finalists will have an opportunity to do a live presentation to students, faculty, and staff. We'll be using the exact same kind of a format as we used here.

That first public presentation will take place next Monday from 1:00 to 2:00 PM. The second one will be Tuesday. The third will be Wednesday. And then the final candidate will have their opportunity on Monday, April 20. I mentioned this for two reasons. One is, we want you to be there. But more importantly, we also want to have you submit questions in advance. It's going to be really helpful for us to be able to see what those questions are. As any of you have been following the live chat, that's a great way for us to communicate during the event. But it's not as easy for us to pull those questions out in real time.

So do think about the kinds of questions you think a Provost needs to answer in order to be working here at Washington State University. In order to find out more information, you can visit [provostsearch.wsu.edu](http://provostsearch.wsu.edu). You can see their curriculum vitae. You can submit your questions there. This is a very different kind of process for the candidates. They're going to have to do this via Zoom. I think it's important for us as a Cougar community to welcome them and make sure we have lots of folks who are participating in each of those public presentations. So again, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and the following Monday, 1:00 to 2:00 PM. Please do join us.

The last thing I will say as we mentioned at the very beginning, we're committed to doing these system-wide town hall meetings every two weeks as long as the interest continues. I think we

can see that we had a lot of folks involved this time around. So look to the next one and the next two weeks.

Again, we will take the questions that we received both electronic questions as well as those submitted live today, and we will do our best to get those answered and posted to the WSU COVID-19 website. Easiest way to find that website is to simply go to [wsu.edu](http://wsu.edu). Follow the links. Again, it includes all the information that we have been providing system-wide since the end of January. So a great resource if you have any questions about what WSU is doing in response to this situation.

So with that, I want to thank our panelists. I also want to thank our subject matter experts who were working live during the chat feature. I can see that they have been answering lots of questions, which I think is great. I want to thank you all for joining us from wherever you are joining, whether it's in the state of Washington or beyond. Enjoy your afternoon. And go, Cougs.

MARY JO GONZALES: Go, Cougs!

KIRK SCHULZ: Go, Cougs!

BRYAN SLINKER: Cougs!