Ridgewater College Students, Faculty & Staff:

I am writing to provide you with an update on the current status of the college’s actions to address challenges and concerns related to the COVID-19 health situation.

I hope you have seen the memo from Chancellor Malhotra that was sent out to the entire Minnesota State system yesterday outlining immediate action plans at all of our colleges and universities. Our college executive team is working closely with the MinnState system office to stay on top of the situation, but it is important for all of us to keep in mind that this is a very dynamic challenge. Many questions cannot be answered at this point and this is new ground for all of us. While our college leadership has legitimately worked to be prepared for emergency situations of this nature, there are aspects of the COVID-19 situation that challenge us to find solutions. In addition, we are getting new information each day that causes us to keep rethinking and revising our strategy to keep all of you as safe as possible, while also trying to find ways to allow our students to complete their courses this semester.

As of today, I can tell you that:

1. All Ridgewater College classes – including online courses – are on hold and will not meet again until Monday, March 23.

2. Over the course of the upcoming week, our faculty and deans will be exploring ways to deliver the remaining weeks of our Spring Semester courses in a non-face-to-face format as of March 23 to allow students to complete the semester as planned. There are many challenges to this objective, especially in our technical programs, but that will be the focus of the work by our faculty and deans next week.

3. All faculty and staff are expected to meet their work obligations next week, beginning on Monday, March 16. While faculty will be engaged in planning work with their colleagues and deans to explore new formats for delivering courses, both of our campuses will be open as usual with staff providing normal services for students. The only difference is that classes will not meet as scheduled through Friday, March 20 – including online classes.

4. Our Ridgewater website is the official source of information on the status of our COVID-19 response plan. We have significantly upgraded information on the home page (www.ridgewater.edu) to keep everyone informed about the latest details of our COVID-19 response strategy. All students, faculty and staff should use this resource on the college website to get the latest information. As soon as we get new information, it will be posted on that webpage, so there is no value in calling the college to ask for more information – everything we know will be shared on that webpage.
5. **Faculty and staff who have Minnesota State laptops should make sure that they take their laptop home with them every night.** This is just a proactive precaution in case by some remote chance we find that we have to close down a campus, which would prevent employees from having access to their computers to work from home. **This does not mean that we are planning to close either campus** – it simply is a precautionary move.

6. **Faculty will get detailed direction from Mike Kutzke, VP of Student Success, by late afternoon today** explaining our plan to work with faculty and deans next week to prepare for continuing delivery of courses as of March 23.

7. **We are suspending all out-of-state travel for students, faculty, and staff, effective March 16.** In-state travel will be considered on a case-by-case basis, requiring approval of the President, and will involve assessment of conditions in destination communities, size of events and potential risk factors.

8. **All campus events and gatherings totaling more than 100 attendees are cancelled until May 1.** Information on the status of college events will be included in the college’s COVID-19 webpage, and a list of upcoming on-campus events that have been cancelled will be available soon on the [webpage](#).

To keep communication lines open, we will also provide a feature on the COVID-19 web page that will allow employees and students to submit questions, concerns and suggestions that will be reviewed daily. **Please use that resource rather than emailing or calling individual offices or staff for more information** – the webpage is the best way to communicate your questions or concerns with administration.

To manage this ongoing challenge, we have also activated our Incident Command process for the college. The IC team will begin meeting weekly to stay on top of the situation.

I understand this is a difficult and uncertain situation for all of us. Please trust that the college leadership team is actively working daily with the system office, peer colleges and local authorities to stay on top of the situation and we will share information as soon as we have it available. We will make it through this challenge and come out better and stronger, and more prepared for these types of situations, through the learning that we will all experience together in the weeks to come.

Thank you for your continued patience and trust!

**Craig Johnson**  
President, Ridgewater College  
Willmar/Hutchinson, MN

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**Ridgewater College Vision:** Ridgewater College is a student-centered educational leader focused on innovation, excellence and affordability.