

More virus precautions at universities



Students walk and jog Monday as they enjoy the warm weather at Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

ECSU officials have issued new measures

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WILLIMANTIC — Eastern Connecticut State University officials say they are working together in an attempt to decrease the chances of a coronavirus outbreak on campus. Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System President Mark E. Ojakian sent an email to the college community, including ECSU, on Monday regarding the coronavirus.

Ojakian reminded folks Connecticut saw its first case of the virus over the weekend in the Danbury area. Another one was confirmed in Connecticut Monday.

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“As the disease spreads around the world and in the United States, we have long expected it to land in Connecticut and have taken all necessary steps to mitigate the effects of the disease on our campuses,” Ojakian wrote.

Ojakian said the college system had previously suspended all institutionally sponsored travel to heavily coronavirus-stricken countries like Iran, Italy, Japan and China.

He said it has also asked community members who traveled to those countries to self-quarantine for 14 days upon their return.

Currently, the college system has placed a freeze on all institutionally sponsored travel outside of Connecticut — including sports teams.

“People are disappointed, but they are understanding,” said Eastern President Elsa Núñez this morning. “Everyone is being cooperative and understands that we need to protect our community.”

In addition, all students, faculty and staff are strongly discouraged from personal travel out-

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UConn, Mansfield taking proactive approach

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STORRS/MANSFIELD — The University of Connecticut has suspended university-sponsored domestic and international travel, with the exception of athletics, in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Meanwhile, town and school officials in Mansfield, the community that hosts UConn, are being proactive about the pandemic as well.

UConn

“Though not an executive branch agency, UConn wishes to act in keeping with the governor’s goals,” a statement issued by

UConn Monday read. “Effective immediately, all domestic and international, university-sponsored travel outside of the state by faculty and staff is suspended until further notice.”

As of this morning, two Connecticut residents, one from Wilton and one from an unidentified town, had tested positive for coronavirus.

As a result, the University of New Haven and Sacred Heart University in Fairfield have suspended in-person classes.

UConn spokesperson Stephanie Reitz said, currently, UConn is on its regular schedule, but contingency plans are in place if the uni-

versity needs to shut down.

“It’s not something we would anticipate in the near term, but if something did change, we would let people know about it as soon as possible,” she said.

UConn employees who wish to apply for a travel exception must do so to the appropriate operational leadership.

Reitz said students were advised against traveling for spring break, which begins after this week, particularly to Iran, China, Italy and South Korea.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention deemed those four countries to

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UConn, Mansfield are being proactive

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be the most dangerous countries in terms of the outbreak.

“The recommendation to students is to reconsider travel, particularly international travel, recognizing that depending on where they are, the situation could change quickly,” Reitz said. “It’s always up to their discretion, but we just want them to make their decision with all of the information available.”

As of now, however, athletic teams are still traveling out of state, with only essential staff traveling with the teams.

Mansfield

Mansfield officials, meanwhile, are in frequent contact with state officials about

the situation, which was discussed by the town council Monday night.

“I do think it’s a serious medical concern,” council member Terry Berthelot said. “I want to make sure we are doing everything we can and that people know that staying home when they’re sick is most important.”

Mansfield Interim Town Manager John Carrington, Mansfield Superintendent of Schools Kelly Lyman and Regional School District 19 Superintendent of Schools Jill Krieger met with Eastern Highlands Health District employees last week to identify and prioritize planning tasks.

Carrington said as recommended by the state

Department of Public Health, the town is preparing for a transition from containing the transmission of the virus to mitigation.

“They’re not making anything mandatory yet, but they are recommending not having assemblies with more than 100 people, things like that,” he said.

Lyman sent a letter to families about the situation last Friday.

The letter states there have been extra cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, such as door knobs and classroom tables, desks and counters, and buses are also being disinfected frequently.

Lyman reminded students and employees to stay home

when ill and seek medical attention as needed.

“Our policy requires that students be fever-free, without medication, for 24 hours prior to returning to school (a fever is defined as 100.4 or higher),” she wrote.

Lyman wrote while the state Department of Education is not recommending school closings at this time, school officials were asked to “consider how we might maintain continuity of learning should schools close and to alert families that you may need to develop plans for childcare.”

Updated information about coronavirus is available on the state website at ct.gov/coronavirus.

Follow Michelle Firestone on Twitter - [@mfirestone](https://twitter.com/mfirestone).