



NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information:

Marion Champion, 760.604.4120
Public Information Officer

Summer and fall classes will move to online format due to COVID-19 emergency

College of the Desert announced Friday, May 1st, that all summer session and fall semester classes will be moved online and the campus will remain closed indefinitely in keeping with COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings.

“The health and safety of our students, faculty and staff and maintaining the quality of our teaching and learning programs are of utmost importance for the College, our Board of Trustees and our administrative team,” Superintendent/President Joel L. Kinnamon, Ed.D. said. “With an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the College’s service area, combined with the lack of a vaccine and the possibility of a second wave of infections, we felt this was the most prudent path.”

All spring semester classes were moved online and faculty and staff began working from home after the Riverside County Public Health Department ordered the closure of all schools in the county on March 13th. Only essential employees have been working on campus and facilities are closed to the public.

This summer and fall, student support services and business operations will continue to operate remotely. The College is working with state licensing boards and other agencies to accommodate required laboratory, clinical and other hands-on courses that don’t lend themselves to remote learning, Kinnamon said.

The College has canceled its May 22nd commencement ceremony at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden because of the pandemic. Plans are underway for a virtual ceremony so graduates can celebrate their accomplishments.

The College’s COVID-19 Response Team is working on a plan for when and how in-person school and jobs can resume. The recovery will occur in phases over several weeks and months, guided by public health orders and guidelines on testing, social distancing, and congregations, Kinnamon said.

Many College of the Desert students come from the poorest and hardest-hit communities in the Coachella Valley. When classes moved online, the College loaned Chromebooks to students who needed them and made sure they had internet access at home. Many of the students also come from families that work in the service, farming and tourism industries and have lost their jobs.

“At a time when many of our students are having a difficult time meeting basic needs, the impact of COVID-19 has only exacerbated these gaps,” Kinnamon said. “Thanks to the College of the Desert Foundation, there has been an outpouring of support through emergency funding to students in need. The response of the foundation has significantly impacted individual students in their efforts to stay in college and meet some of their basic needs.”

For information on available resources, district operations and coronavirus updates, visit the Coronavirus update section at www.collegeofthedesert.edu/coronavirus.

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