

# Taylor shuts down campus for spring semester, moves classes online

Residence halls closed, commencement postponed

By MATTHEW PHILLIPS



Freshman Jaxson Austin prepares to leave Gerig Hall.

**This story has been revised 3/21/20 regarding a past Taylor closure due to the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic.**

Taylor University has canceled on-campus classes for the remainder of the spring semester as a precaution against the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Interim President Paige Cunningham and Provost Michael Hammond announced the decision in a press release Friday, March 20.

“As we have monitored the developments of the COVID-19 pandemic, and received direction from federal, state, and local authorities, this has become the most prudent option,” the press release said.

The remainder of the semester will be taught online, starting March 30. Additionally, commencement has been postponed.

Residence halls will also be closed down immediately, the press release said. In a later email Friday, Scott Barrett — director of residence life — announced students still living on campus need to move out by 5 p.m. Sunday, March 22, unless they submit a petition to stay on campus longer.

“My heart breaks for our students who have had this disruption to their semester,” Hammond said in a later statement to The Echo. “To the seniors who have been through so much, and now have doubts about their commencement ceremony. To the athletes and musicians who have practiced and are ready to perform ... the spring break trips and others prepared to minister Christ’s redemptive love. For our international

students who have tougher challenges in the midst of a global pandemic. For all of our students who have such high hopes each spring for Airband, traditions, and the joy of finishing the year well.

“Even though I am confident that this is the right decision for the health and safety of Taylor, I understand the hurt and frustration that many are feeling right now. We sometimes think of ourselves as the ‘Taylor family.’ I cannot wait for our family reunion, whenever that can take place.”

The decision to shut down campus follows the announcement of Grant County’s first confirmed case of COVID-19 case on Friday. On March 19, Grant County was also placed on an Orange level travel advisory, limiting movement to essential travel. As of March 19, there are 79 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Indiana, according to state officials.

However, this is not the first time in Taylor history students have been sent home, said Jim Garringer, director of media relations. During the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, Taylor dismissed classes and discontinued meetings until quarantine ended, according to a 1918 article of The Echo.

Amidst the uncertainty COVID-19 has caused, Garringer reminded the Taylor community that the administration has students’ best interests in mind.

“One thing that I am confident in is that our administration first and foremost loves Jesus,” Garringer said. “Second, they love the students that God has entrusted to them to them. For that reason, everything we do must be for the sake and safety of our students.”

With all of the recent changes due to COVID-19, the students, staff and faculty have been left reeling.

For students left on campus and students who have already departed, the future looks uncertain after such rapid-paced upheaval.

“One thing I’ve been thinking a lot about with this whole situation is how we shouldn’t prohibit grieving,” said junior Abby Wilson. “Yes, there are worse situations in the world. I know that. But that doesn’t change the fact that the place that I (as a TCK) consider home has been ripped out from underneath me, and trying to ‘be positive’ just makes me feel worse. Just because my pain may be less than someone else’s doesn’t mean that it isn’t real.”

Please visit Taylor’s dedicated COVID-19 website, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Indiana State Health Department for more information.

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