

The below email was sent to all Ashford Faculty on March 21, 2020



Dear Ashford University Faculty,

I wanted to express my sincere appreciation for your responsiveness to our students in the face of the current public health crisis. At the risk of overcommunicating, given the fluidity of the situation we feel an obligation to make sure that you have access to the most current information and resources to assist you, as well as the messaging being directed to students. Below the body of this message is an email that students are being sent.

We continue to receive communication from the US Department of Education and from WSCUC encouraging us to allow flexibility during this transition. The good news is that Ashford is already expertly positioned to help our students continue their academic programs without interruption.

As tumultuous as this time is and has been for all of us, I'm especially cognizant of the impacts to our student population. In times of such uncertainty, we each must develop strategies that help us hope and cope. Having something positive and constructive to think and do is key for most of us. As educators, we have a special obligation to help our students focus on their studies and make personal progress. At the risk of repetition, below are steps we think are appropriate to help our students deal with the pressures they face right now:

- **Flexible Due Dates** – Please remain flexible with regard to assignment due dates and penalties for students who report personal and family illness and environmental impacts. Timely response to students who make a request is especially helpful as they are often struggling to decide whether they can continue their schooling. It is also appropriate for you to reach out to students who seem to be struggling. In this time of great stress, a short assignment extension may be the key to a student finishing this course and progressing onward.
- **Incomplete grade requests (“I” grade)** - If students are seeking extensions beyond a week after the course end date, they should request an [Incomplete grade](#) in their current course. Please send all Incomplete requests to gradechange@ashford.edu.
- Where needs fall outside the classroom, please encourage students to reach out to their **Academic Advisors**. Please include student advisors on applicable communication to students through Civitas IFF. Advisor contact information is also available in your weekly Faculty Student Engagement student roster.

Please reach out to your CETL and college contacts for support. We are here to address the questions or needs that arise in your course. You can refer to the [CETL COVID-19 Updates page](#) for the ongoing faculty communication and resources related to COVID-19.

- **Please inform your Faculty Support contact or CETL@ashford.edu** if you think you might not be able to access your course for a period.

In closing, please forgive a personal aside. One of our colleagues, Dr. Peggy Sundstrom, wrote to me about a student concern. I don't think she will mind me sharing part of our conversation. She wrote, "I interpret social distancing to mean physical separation . . . but it must be tempered with a coming together of hearts and souls in a spiritual or emotional sense. I believe we as faculty need to be strong so our students can take comfort (if they need to) in our care and support."

We are engaged in a just and noble cause. A teacher never knows whether that one extra effort to engage with an individual student will change the course of a life—or of many lives. I know from experience that many of you share that deep sense of responsibility.

Warmest regards,

Craig

CRAIG D. SWENSON, PH.D. / PRESIDENT

Ashford University



(The following message has been sent to all Ashford University students.)

Subject Line: Ashford University Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19): Basic Needs and Self-Care Resources

Dear Student,

I wanted to reach out with some information that might be useful to you as you navigate the challenges we face together during this crisis. You and your families are in our thoughts and we want to support you as much as we possibly can. As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve here are a few resources you might find helpful:

- **United Way 2-1-1** – Call 2-1-1 is a free information and referral resource connecting community members with available services. If you need assistance locating resources such as finding food, paying housing bills, accessing free childcare, or other essential services in your community, visit www.211.org or just dial 211 to connect with a trained professional.
- **Ashford Blog** – If you haven't already, be sure to read the Ashford blog post [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and How to Manage Life, School, and Work with Kids at Home](#). In it, you'll find several tips to help you remain focused on your own schoolwork while keeping your kids engaged and entertained. (Just a side note: In our home, our two sons 8 and 13 are out of school because of COVID-19 and we're all learning to work and live in close quarters 24X7—you may be going through the same experience—so Good Luck to us all!)

- **Ashford Facebook Groups – “Social distancing”** is our newest buzz phrase. I think we should change it to **“physical distancing.”** We need to remember that we are, by nature, social beings and, more than ever, we need to keep **“socially connecting.”** It’s a critical part of our emotional well-being. [Ashford Connections](#) is a place for potential and current students and alumni to support one another, share encouragement, and offer guidance. You can search content for answers to your questions or post your question in the group. To join our Facebook group, simply answer the membership question prompts and our community manager, [Natalie Mell](#), will review and approve your request.
- **Student Advocate HELPLine** – Reach out through the HELPLine when you find yourself in the greatest physical or emotional need. HELPLine is a place to address concerns regarding your immediate safety and to identify community resources. If you are struggling with suicidal thoughts, the loss of a loved one, domestic violence, homelessness, or another hardship, email HELP@ashford.edu to connect with a Student Advocate.
- **Ashford Hub** – Visit [The Ashford Hub](#) to learn new ways to manage your time, to access videos on meditation and mindfulness, to receive inspiration and guidance for at-home exercise, and much more..

In closing, I know that this is a challenging, chaotic, and upsetting time. But I also know that this crisis will pass. I believe that we will learn from it and that in some very surprising ways this experience will bring us closer and help heal some of the divisions that have grown up in our society.

Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones and let us know how we can help you continue to pursue your dreams.

Sincerely,

Craig

CRAIG D. SWENSON, PH.D. / PRESIDENT
Ashford University