



Friday, March 6

Dear SMC Colleagues & Students:

This is an urgent communication, and I ask that you read this to the end. This past Wednesday, on March 4, Los Angeles County declared a public health emergency around the COVID-19—also known as the 2019 novel coronavirus. Subsequently, Governor Gavin Newsom [declared a state of emergency](#), following the death of one individual in Northern California, an elderly adult with underlying health conditions.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has confirmed 11 total cases of COVID-19 in LA County. At this time, [per Public Health](#), there is no immediate threat to the general public and no special precautions are required but it is highly recommended that everyone practice good public health hygiene as this is also the height of flu season.

**\*NEW\* SMC Covid-19 Informational Webpage**

Santa Monica College's Emergency Operations Team, in collaboration with key administrative units including Academic Affairs, Enrollment Development, Student Affairs, Facilities, and Human Resources, is actively developing plans and protocols—including [an instructor continuity plan](#)—to prepare for any eventuality related to COVID-19. A consolidated webpage has been developed and dedicated exclusively to COVID-19 related information and resources; prevention measures and SMC preparedness; and FAQs for students, faculty & staff, and visitors. **Please make note of this webpage and check it regularly for updates: [smc.edu/coronavirus](http://smc.edu/coronavirus).** Also, follow SMC on Twitter: [@SMC\\_edu](#).

You have received—and will continue to receive—updates on Santa Monica College's preparedness efforts via [bulletins@smc.edu](mailto:bulletins@smc.edu) from **Susan Fila**, Director of Health & Well-being; **Teresita Rodriguez**, Vice President of Enrollment Development; and **Michael Tuitasi**, Vice President of Student Affairs (these past messages are also on [smc.edu/coronavirus](http://smc.edu/coronavirus)). The college's leadership and Emergency Operations Team is constantly monitoring the situation and is in touch with local, state, and federal agencies.

**An Important Reminder: Coronavirus is not an Excuse for Discrimination**

Meanwhile, across the globe—as anyone watching the news can attest—panic, fear, and hysteria are on the rise, impacting every aspect of our interconnected lives on this planet. This fear, in almost all cases unfounded on facts, has also been the catalyst for xenophobic, racist, and discriminatory behavior especially against individuals of Asian descent in several locations around the globe, and right here at home in the U.S.

Santa Monica College's [mission](#) is to provide a “safe, inclusive, and dynamic learning environment” for *all* students, and [SMC prohibits unlawful discrimination and harassment](#) in any arena of college life. The college will not tolerate such behavior against students or employees who are targeted based on actual or perceived race, nationality, religion, sexual

orientation, gender, or immigration status, among other things. This institution holds dear the values of diversity and inclusivity in a world where fear of “the other” and misinformation propels despicable incidents, which no human being should have to endure.

So, what are the facts? According to the Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), [diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity](#). This means **people of Asian descent are no more likely to get COVID 19 than you or me**. It is also important to note that—even as we prepare for any eventuality and focus on preventive measures—the **risk of getting COVID-19 in the U.S. and California is currently low**, per the CDC. In addition, someone who has been quarantined or released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to others.

**If you witness an incident of possible unlawful discrimination, or believe that you have been a target of such behavior, please refer to the following resources:**

**\*\*Students/Employees:** Fill out the [Unlawful Discrimination Complaint Form \(PDF\)](#)\*\*

**Students:**

- **SMC Ombudsperson:** [ombuds@smc.edu](mailto:ombuds@smc.edu) | (310) 434-3986
- **The Center for Wellness & Wellbeing:** (310) 434-4503
- **Campus Police:** (310) 434-4300

**Employees:**

- **Office of Human Resources:** [hrcomplaints@smc.edu](mailto:hrcomplaints@smc.edu) | (310) 434-4415
- **Employee Assistance Service for Education Program (EASE):** (800) 882-1341

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My ardent plea to each of you—and not just in this current moment—is that **if you see something, say something**. Fear is a dangerous thing, and I urge you to be calm, rational, and well informed. Here at Santa Monica College, we are working hard to keep our community safe and healthy; it is equally urgent that we ensure every member of the college community feel safe. Let us work together to ensure that there is absolutely no hate, prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance—COVID-19 or no—at Santa Monica College.

While situations like these often create high levels of anxiety, uncertainty, deep concern, and even fear, please be assured that the safety and well-being of the SMC community remains our top priority, and we will continue to provide you with the most reliable and up-to-date information possible on [SMC's COVID-19 webpage](#).

Sincerely,



Kathryn E. Jeffery, Ph.D.

Superintendent/President, Santa Monica College.