

## INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures to move to remote work, cancel in-person classes, or cease portions of the University's operations due to hazardous weather conditions and to provide continuity of essential operations during inclement weather.

### Statement of Policy

The University of Mary recognizes that adverse weather conditions can impact university operations. While every attempt is made to maintain normal operations and services for the benefit of students, faculty, and staff, it may occasionally be necessary to close university facilities and limit in-person services when extreme weather conditions occur.

The University does not advise employees or students to take unwarranted risks when traveling to university campuses or facilities in the event of inclement weather or other emergencies. Each person should exercise his or her best judgment with regard to road conditions and other safety concerns. Therefore, no employee or student should travel to university campuses or facilities if he or she feels the conditions are unsafe.

### Life-Threatening Emergency Communication Plan (All Locations)

Not to be confused with the policies and procedures laid out in this Inclement Weather Policy is any life-threatening emergency that demands immediate action. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, the first individual with knowledge of the situation and access to the Emergency Notification System has the authority and obligation to send the notification. Full information can be found in the University's Emergency Plan.

### Procedures

#### Closing Decisions

Main Campus/all other Bismarck sites:

- A. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and/or the Executive Vice President, in consultation with the other, are authorized to make the decision to close the University and/or cancel in-person class meetings, delay opening, or close early due to inclement weather. Deans/chairs, department heads, directors, and supervisors are not authorized to make closing decisions or cancel classes in their areas of responsibility. In the event that neither the Vice President for Academic Affairs nor the Executive Vice President are available to make the decision, another member of President's Council will make the decision.

- B. In these events, the University will strive to provide as much advance notice as possible, with the goal of making announcements regarding the cancellation of morning classes by 6:00 a.m., the cancellation of afternoon classes by 11:00 a.m., and the cancellation of evening classes (beginning 5:00 p.m. or later) by 2:00 p.m. Closing decisions for the next workday may also be announced during evening hours when hazardous weather conditions warrant.

Communication to all Bismarck location students should be sent with clear instruction using the guidelines found in “Announcement of Class Cancellations/Closing Decisions” below.

All other sites and locations:

- A. The leading staff member at each site (or the next senior staff member, if that person is unavailable) is authorized to make a recommendation to the Vice President responsible for that site to cancel in-person classes, close the facility, delay opening, or close early due to inclement weather. The staff member may take into consideration the decisions by other schools in the area.

Once a recommendation has been received, the Vice President responsible for the site will make a final decision. In the event that the Vice President responsible for the site is not available, the leading staff member at the location should consult the Vice President for Academic Affairs or the Executive Vice President.

- B. The Vice President responsible for the site (or in his or her absence, the person making the decision) will notify the requestor of the decision. If any communication to the students and/or facilitators is appropriate, then communication should be sent with clear instruction using the guidelines found in “Announcement of Class Cancellations/ Closing Decisions” below.

The leading staff member at each location shall handle communication to local media outlets regarding the decision made.

#### Defining University Closure

When a campus of the University is closed, it normally means that (1) most employees will work remotely and remain available to meet student needs and (2) teaching and learning will continue via technology. (3) Using the University’s learning management system, instructors are responsible to communicate coursework expectations to their students and (4) students are responsible to stay informed of these expectations. (5) Employees are responsible to consult with supervisors about remote work to be done and (6) supervisors are responsible to ensure that employees have meaningful work to

be accomplished remotely while campus is closed.

Under some conditions the University will delay opening. In these circumstances, weather reports suggest that conditions will improve early in the day and the delay allows commuter students, staff, and faculty additional time to travel to campus, limits the number of people commuting during the rush hours, and allows for clearing of parking lots and roads. Under some conditions the University will close early. In these circumstances, weather has deteriorated in the course of the day such that it is prudent for commuter students, staff, and faculty to depart from campus before travel becomes more hazardous.

There are certain personnel who must report for work even when the University is closed so that the University can serve the essential needs of residential students (see “Designated Personnel,” below).

Announcement of Class Cancellations/Closing Decisions

- A. The individual making the decision will initiate the process of communicating the class cancellations/closing decision to the University of Mary community.
  
- B. Once a decision has been made, the individual making the decision (e.g., Executive Vice President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President responsible for a site, etc.) must first inform appropriate staff of the decision via email. The distribution list should be as follows: President’s Council (all), the Supervisor of Creative Services, the Media Relations Specialist, the Coordinator of Safety and Security, and the Switchboard Operator. These individuals can be found readily under a distribution list entitled “Weather-Related Announcement Group.”
  - a. This email communication from the individual making the decision should also include a first draft of the text to be published on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu).
  - b. For satellite campuses, this communication will be composed and sent by the Vice President responsible for the site.
  
- C. All weather-related closure or cancellation information will first be posted to [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu). The text of these messages should always end with: “Students are expected to consult with their instructors using Canvas to determine whether coursework will be assigned or administered. For the safety of our community, the most up-to-date mobile/cell number provided by students and employees will be automatically enrolled in our Emergency Notification System (ENS). Students and staff may update their mobile/cell phone numbers by visiting [my.umary.edu](http://my.umary.edu)”
  - a. The responsibility to post this information to [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) in a timely fashion belongs to the Vice President for Public Affairs or his or her delegate.

The Office of Public Affairs will also proofread or otherwise edit this initial draft for clarity of information, and it will ensure that the conclusion of the message reads as noted above.

- b. [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) is the primary hub for all official University of Mary communication regarding closure/cancellation. Once [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) is updated, the Vice President for Public Affairs or his or her delegate replies to all members of the email distribution list to inform that this action has been completed. All information posted on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) is to be “time-stamped” at the beginning of each post (e.g., “Oct. 21, 5:57am: The University of Mary is closed due to inclement weather...”).
- D. As soon as that information is visible at [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu), and not before, two things happen:
- a. the individual making the decision, who is responsible for sending the initial text through the emergency notification system, sends one of two text messages:
    - i. “Weather Alert: See [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu). More info here soon.”
    - ii. “Urgent Alert: See [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu).”
  - b. the Vice President for Public Affairs(or his or her delegate), who is responsible for distribution on social media platforms, posts only the “8000.umary.edu reminder” graphic to Facebook and Twitter, with no additional or introductory text.
    - i. The 8000.umary.edu reminder graphic features the following message: “A reminder: critical information regarding unanticipated events is relayed to the University of Mary community through the campus Emergency Notification System and posted to 8000.umary.edu. To receive emergency notifications via text, students and staff may update their mobile/cell phone numbers by visiting [my.umary.edu](http://my.umary.edu)”
- E. Following the initial issuance of a “Weather Alert”, the issuer of the text waits 5-10 minutes before vital information from the message on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) is issued through further texts (160 characters maximum). If an “Urgent Alert” was issued, vital information is transmitted through [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) and texts without delay as information becomes available.
- F. Often, the office of public affairs then alerts appropriate media outlets. Bismarck media outlets include:
- a. TV – KFYR and KXMB
  - b. Radio – KFYR 550 and KBMR 1130

- G. Following posting of the immediately relevant closure/cancellation information, the Director of Residence Life, Director of University Ministry, Director of Student Life, and Dining Services will report appropriate information regarding services and activities on campus through email to the Vice President for Public Affairs within one hour after the initial text. The Vice President for Public Affairs will then post on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) and subsequently send out notices through text.

Other departments may draft additional updates, announcements, or clarifications for posting on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu), to be submitted by email to the Vice President for Public Affairs. The Vice President for Public Affairs is responsible for validating relevance, proofreading, or otherwise editing the initial drafts for clarity of information and then posting the notices. Each post on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) should be “time-stamped,” and each new post should be placed at the top of the page, above previous posts.

- H. The Vice President for Public Affairs prompts the university switchboard to take appropriate action. University switchboard is responsible for informing incoming callers to the switchboard of all university class cancellations/closing decisions. The announcement will include: cancellation of classes (if applicable); time of closing; and direction for callers to monitor [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu). Circumstances will dictate whether this announcement is accomplished through voicemail greeting or if the switchboard operator will continue to answer incoming calls. Care must be taken that the cancellation voicemail is operative only during the actual closure.

#### Designated Personnel

- A. Determination of designated personnel:
- a. When a closing decision is made, certain categories of employees (identified as “designated personnel”) are required to travel to campus and work their normally scheduled shifts and/or in excess of their normally scheduled shifts as required during inclement weather to ensure continuity of essential operations.
  - b. Supervisors of designated personnel are responsible for informing their employees, in writing, of their responsibilities as designated personnel, their assignment, and the requirement to report to work on time for their regular work shift whenever the Inclement Weather Policy is in effect due to hazardous weather conditions or any acts which may result in a closing decision for the University. Supervisors are responsible for notifying current employees of their designated personnel status on an annual basis and informing new employees when they accept employment offers.
  - c. Custodial/physical plant employees and campus safety/security employees are generally considered designated personnel. Employees who live on campus (e.g., resident directors, priest chaplains, etc.) are generally not

considered designated personnel, even though they may not be working remotely during a campus closure.

- B. Other categories of employees may occasionally be considered “designated personnel” when circumstances require a change in status. Supervisors will notify the employee(s) of this change in status as soon as practical which, in certain circumstances, may mean during the course of a campus closure.
- C. Designated personnel for remote campus locations are determined by the Vice President responsible for the site.

**Approved**

April 2017 by the President of the University

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