

PLU

Dear APLU Member,

On behalf of all of us at APLU, I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well along with your entire campus and university system communities. We are in unprecedented times and the public higher education community is grappling with so many complex and challenging issues related to COVID-19 at once.

All of you have swiftly and comprehensively been tending to the needs of students, faculty, staff, and your entire university operations. The focus and resilience you've demonstrated over these past several weeks is extraordinarily impressive. Those of you with medical centers are on the front lines of treating the ill from this terrible virus and many of you have research and public health activities underway to help stem the crisis. Despite your own challenges, it's been incredibly heartening, yet far from surprising, to see the commitment to helping the public on full display at public universities across North America. From emergency medical supply donations, to blood drives, to food banks, to support for local small businesses, public universities are stepping up in a vast number of ways to meet the needs of the public.

Update on APLU & Our Staff

Here at APLU, our physical offices will remain closed through at least the end of April in accordance with federal guidelines. As you may recall, we initially closed our office after learning that one member of our team was exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19. While that individual was never able to be tested for the virus, I am pleased to report that she completed her quarantine period, recovered, and we did not receive reports from other APLU staff that they exhibited symptoms as a result of being in contact with this person.

We are fortunate to have invested in an array of remote working technology in recent years that has enabled the entire APLU team to work effectively and

collaboratively from home. In some ways, technology is bringing us together more than before. So while our office remains physically closed, our staff members are hard at work to help you address the many challenges at hand.

Federal Advocacy Efforts

As you know, last week Congress approved and President Trump subsequently enacted a third emergency supplemental funding bill that provided a minimum of \$14 billion for higher education and \$1.3 billion for COVID-19 research activities as well as useful regulatory flexibility to help us better serve students in these unusual circumstances. Our government affairs, public affairs, and data and policy teams worked extremely hard to make the case for funding to support these areas, which were left out of the initial proposal in the Senate. Our advocacy was in deep collaboration with many of you, particularly those who are part of our Council on Governmental Affairs. It's unquestionable that you helped create the conditions in which this funding was possible and helped push it over the finish line. APLU combed through every part of the measure and quickly provided a [detailed analysis](#) of what the bill means for our members, including a best estimate breakdown of the numbers school by school.

We know that while helpful, the funding provided in this recently approved message does not come close to addressing the needs of public universities. We are now deeply engaged with you in pressing the case for more support for universities and students in an expected fourth emergency supplemental funding bill.

Supporting Public Research Universities as They Address Impact of COVID-19

There are many issues you are all confronting right now and APLU staff have quickly pivoted to help you address these challenges together as a public university community. From questions about finances, enrollment, international students, digital learning, mental health, research, and much more, APLU has sought to provide the forums and opportunities for all members to learn from one another and identify helpful practices. And we are committed to sharing best practices and expertise widely. APLU is collecting and sharing communications from universities, advocacy documents, materials from government agencies and more at www.aplu.org/covid19.

Our team has helped convene a series of webinars and virtual meetings for our councils and commissions, including one for presidents and chancellors on an array of leadership issues; and others for academic officers and faculty to learn the best ways to quickly shift to online learning; for communicators on how to best keep the campus community and others informed and safe; for international officers to help address international student enrollment and to identify ways to provide all students with a virtual, global experience; and much more.

Some groups at APLU are holding weekly calls such as our economic and community engagement commission, which is collecting and sharing a variety of

ways schools are helping their communities. Our research and student affairs councils are similarly holding weekly video conferences to share information across campuses and to feed their concerns and insights back to government affairs. We are also utilizing and expanding the use of our list serves and other communications tools to ensure members are receiving timely information from us and from one another. With each day, we are constantly exploring new ways to connect with all of you and serve your needs.

Although much of our recent work at APLU has been helping you address issues related to COVID-19, our work in other areas continues. Just this week, APLU and our ASPIRE Alliance released a [report and guidebook](#) on ways institutions can strengthen the pathways to faculty careers in STEM for individuals from underrepresented groups. And our annual institutional award process for degree completion, community engagement, economic engagement, and internationalization are all opening up albeit with delayed timelines to ensure interested schools can tend to immediate needs on campus and still apply.

The Road Ahead

While we do not know how long or just how severe this pandemic will be, one thing that is certain is the resilience of each of your institutions and your unflinching commitment to the public good. One of the things that makes me most proud of our members and APLU is the strong sense of shared purpose and a deep commitment to helping one another. That spirit has been on full display in recent weeks as each of you has stepped up to serve your campus and local communities and the public university community at large.

We wish you and your entire university community the very best during these challenging times. Please feel free to reach out to me or any of us at APLU with any questions, suggestions, or comments. We are here to serve you.

Best,
Peter McPherson
APLU President