



**Westchester  
Community College**

State University of New York

# **Pandemic Preparedness Plan**

**Last Updated: March 23, 2020**

### I. IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this plan, the following terms below are defined as follows:

- A. **Social Distancing**: Actions taken to discourage close social contact between individuals.
- B. **Campus**: The buildings and grounds utilized or occupied by Westchester Community College where classes and/or services are facilitated, housed and/or maintained; this includes buildings and grounds on the main campus in Valhalla, Extension Centers throughout Westchester County and other physical locations.
- C. **Essential Personnel**: Individual employees assigned duties or tasks related to securing and maintaining the campus and its facilities, ensuring the well-being of individuals unable to be vacated from campus, and/or other services deemed critical to campus operations by the President or their designee. These individuals will be duly approved by the President or their designee.

### II. BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Pandemics are a part of human history and are known to have occurred several times each century. There were three pandemics in the last century, in 1918, 1957 and 1968. Because people have no natural resistance to a new virus, and there is no readily available vaccine, pandemics often result in much more severe illness and even death. A pandemic can occur at any time of the year and resurges in waves that can last from 18 months to 2 years.

It is the intent of Westchester Community College to play an integral role in protecting the health and safety of its students, faculty and staff in the event of a pandemic. A pandemic could significantly interrupt normal college functions for several months and may require closure of the college. In the past, when a pandemic declaration is deemed likely or imminent, government agencies, typically the US Department of Education, have asked colleges to ensure that an emergency crisis plan, specific to measures to prepare for and deal with a pandemic, is in place.

In anticipation of the profound potential of such a threat and understanding that there will be little time to act once the event starts, Westchester Community College is formulating a general response plan for a pandemic. It is important to note that this plan was written as a general response to a potential pandemic. The college will assess and update this plan based on information related to the specific disease/illness associated with a declared pandemic.

The focus of this plan is to: (1) minimize the risks of exposure among faculty, staff and students; (2) maintain and/or restore the student-learning environment; and (3) maintain a reduced level of key college operations through remote or online interaction, in the event social distancing measures and/or a college closure are implemented.

### **III. GENERAL IMPACT AND OUTCOMES OF A PANDEMIC**

While the impact and outcomes of a pandemic vary based on the specific illness/disease associated with the outbreak, there are several general outcomes the college can anticipate, including high absenteeism from work, school or other obligations due to an individual's own illness or the need for individuals to take care of ill family or other loved ones. Other examples may include, but are not limited to: (1) the closing of schools and businesses to try to reduce the spread of disease; and/or (2) the cancellation of large group gatherings. These general outcomes present significant challenges to college leadership as the delivery of college functions and operations will be strained in all areas of the operation.

### **IV. EMERGENCY ORGANIZATION**

In the event that the President of Westchester Community College or their designee deems it necessary to declare a "college state of emergency" based upon a possible or imminent pandemic, the college's Pandemic Response Team (PRT) will be activated. The composition, authority, and structure of the PRT will largely mirror the Emergency Response Team found in the College's Emergency Response Plan.

The PRT will be assembled to provide rapid communication and decision-making in the event of a declared pandemic. Specifically, the PRT will review and approve decisions to: (a) cancel and/or reduce large group gatherings; (b) cancel and/or implement distance learning measures for classes; (c) cancel and/or implement remote measures for other scheduled activities/services; (d) move the college to full remote operations; (e) close and reopen the college; (e) stockpile essential equipment; and/or (f) communicate with the college community, including the Westchester Educational Opportunity Center (WEOC), Board of Trustees, Westchester County, and State University of New York System Office.

In the event the college moves to full remote operations (Level 3 or 4) or a college closure (Level 5), the PRT will direct the operations of the college. The PRT will also work with state and local public health and other local authorities to identify legal authority, decision makers and thresholds to institute community containment measures such as closing and re-opening the college.

Policies and procedures may be suspended or modified by the President or the President's designee in order to promote health, safety, and minimal disruption.

The PRT will be chaired by the College President. In the absence of the President, the following individuals will Chair the PRT, listed in order of succession:

1. Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
2. Vice President of Student Access, Involvement and Success
3. Vice President of Administrative Services
4. President's Chief of Staff and Vice President of Strategic Operations

Members of the PRT will include the following individuals:

1. Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
2. Vice President of Student Access, Involvement and Success
3. Vice President of Administrative Services
4. President's Chief of Staff and Vice President of Strategic Operations
5. Vice President of Information Technology
6. Associate Dean of Student Life
7. Coordinator of Health Services
8. Director of Marketing & Communications
9. Manager of Creative Communications
10. Director of Human Resources
11. Director of Physical Plant
12. Director of Campus Security
13. Executive Director of the Faculty/Student Association
14. Associate Dean and Director of the Westchester Educational Opportunity Center

## **V. ESCALATING LEVELS & ACTION ITEMS**

In an effort to help coordinate the college's response to a pandemic, the college has designated five types of pandemic and societal conditions, referred to as LEVELS, with ACTION ITEMS to be taken at each level. The definitions of each level, action items, and number of levels are all subject to change based on known information regarding the specific illness/disease associated with the pandemic. All action items listed below will only initiate based on the order of the College President or designee.

**NOTE:** Levels are listed in order of escalation and not sequentially. For example, the College may opt to move from a Level 1 to a Level 3, bypassing Level 2.

### **LEVEL 1: ACTIVE PREPARATION**

First cases of efficient human-to-human transmission internationally.

#### Action Items:

- (1) College stays open with normal business operations, including classes and on-campus events
- (2) College will take specific steps to prepare for Level 2; and
- (3) Communication with the college community regarding plans for response.

### **LEVEL 2: SOCIAL DISTANCING**

First verified case in the United States combined with at least one of the triggering events listed below.

#### Action Items:

- (1) Social distancing measures will be adopted, including, but not limited to steps to:
  - a) cancel and/or reduce large gatherings;
  - b) cancel and/or implement distance learning measures for classes; and/or
  - c) cancel and/or implement remote measures for other scheduled activities/services/functions.
- (2) Notification to the community about immediate social distancing policies including information about which operations, services, classes, etc. will be available remotely.

### **LEVEL 3: FULL REMOTE OPERATIONS**

The escalation of one or more triggering events (listed below) that the College believes warrants moving all college operations to a remote environment.

#### Action Items:

- (1) All college operations will move to a remote environment, including classes and critical services for student support and institutional operations;
- (2) Access to the college will be sealed off for vehicles and pedestrians. Only essential personnel will be permitted on college property;
- (3) Essential personnel will be required to report to campus in order to facilitate essential operations;
- (4) Non-essential personnel/operations will not remain on-campus, but will be instructed to work remotely. The President may authorize specific non-essential personnel to access the campus in order to continue to facilitate remote operations.

### **LEVEL 4: FULL REMOTE OPERATIONS & EVACUATION**

The escalation of one or more triggering events (listed below) that the College believes warrants moving all college operations to a remote environment **WITH** the closure of all college facilities.

#### Action Items:

- (1) All college facilities will close;
- (2) Access to the college will be sealed off for vehicles and pedestrians;
- (3) All college operations will move to a remote environment, including classes and critical services for student support and institutional operations;
- (4) All outside service contracts & construction projects will be suspended;
- (5) Essential personnel will only be allowed access to college facilities for tasks related to securing and maintaining the college and its facilities;
- (6) Non-essential personnel will not report to campus, but will be instructed to work remotely.

### **LEVEL 5: COLLEGE CLOSURE**

At the direction of the President or President's designee based upon exigent circumstances.

#### Action Items:

- (1) The college will close and be fully evacuated;
- (2) Access to the college will be sealed off for vehicles and pedestrians;
- (3) Essential personnel will be allowed access to college facilities for tasks related to securing and maintaining the college and its facilities;

- (4) Work by non-essential personnel will be suspended; and
- (5) Classes and other scheduled activities/services will be suspended.

### **RECOVERY LEVEL:**

Once the pandemic is under control, the college will be poised to reopen. The PRT will assess any work/operations needed to be performed before the college fully reopens

Action Items:

- (1) Identify and execute all work/operations required to be performed before the college fully opens (i.e. cleanings, notifications, etc); and
- (2) following Action Item 1, the college will fully reopen to the entire college community for business.

### **Triggering Events**

- (1) increased and sustained transmission in the general U.S population;
- (2) confirmation of a high rate of infectivity, morbidity and/or mortality;
- (3) rate/speed of disease spreading;
- (4) public health recommendation to curtail/cancel activities in the county or state;
- (5) falling class attendance, rising employee absenteeism, or other regional schools and systems closing; and/or
- (6) transportation systems closing or curtailing services.