



March 17, 2020

Dear NOLS Students and Community,

Thank you for your ongoing support, patience, and enduring positivity as we navigate through this challenging time.

As a school, we have come together in our efforts to understand, monitor, and help respond to COVID-19 impacts. We continue to work and stay in close consultation with federal and state public health experts, peer organizations, and our educational partners as we make decisions to support the health and well-being of our students, staff, and faculty.

I would like to share updates that have taken place around the school. We do not make these decisions lightly and believe this immediate action will best support our students and people.

As of March 16, NOLS suspended all courses currently in the field. Location teams are working to bring students back to campus at the first scheduled opportunity to leave the field for safe travel home. We see increasing uncertainty around domestic and international travel, signalled by cascades of new restrictions each day. We also see growing indications that the school may be unable to offer routine or emergency support to courses while they are in the field, even domestically. For these reasons, we made this decision at a point when we still have confidence in the societal support systems and freedom of travel that let us operate in an organized manner.

As you can imagine, this is a complex effort to coordinate and NOLS is committed to working with impacted students by providing on-campus care, assistance in travel logistics, and overall support to help their efforts to return home. We are also working with our students through the financial impacts of these changes.

As of March 17, NOLS cancelled upcoming field-based programming through May 11, 2020. Following governmental guidance around social distancing, group size restrictions, limiting travel, and ever-changing travel advisories, the school believes these efforts will allow us to contribute to “flattening the curve” of the pandemic.

Course changes are summarized as such:

- Wilderness Medicine, Risk Services and Custom Education classroom-based courses are suspended through May 11.
- Expedition field courses are cancelled through May 11.

We will continue to assess the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on escalating travel, health, and safety restrictions and proactively communicate any impacts on future courses.

For our staff, the school has initiated telecommuting and work from home opportunities. We are asking staff to limit travel and unnecessary social mixing situations in an effort to slow transmission. The school is implementing a leave policy that provides 14 days of paid leave for employees showing symptoms or



supporting family members who may be affected. We are also providing faculty impacted by course cancellations support including honoring qualifying work agreements, some travel reimbursements, and opportunity for alternative work.

Beyond our students and staff, NOLS is considering ways in which the school and our people might be able to provide greater support to communities in which we operate.

These are unprecedented times, and each day we see changes that we would not have predicted even a week ago. At the same time, it has been truly inspiring to see the NOLS and larger community come together as problem-solvers who know that we will get through this. We don't know when, and the horizon is shrouded in the fog of the immediate, but I am comfortable in our ability to navigate adversity and uncertainty. It's what we do.

In the meantime, be kind to each other, look out for one another, be cautious with your health, and thanks for being part of our team.

Sincerely,

Terri Watson
President