

COVID-19 Business Contingency Plan

3-16-2020

As a largely remote workforce and wholly online college, American College of Education is in a unique situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of our 320+ employees already work remotely, so business continuity can be continued. In addition, all courses are 100% online, so we have instructional continuity.

Business Function Recovery Priorities

A Business Contingency Plan is used to ensure essential business operations in the event of a crisis or situation which causes a significant disruption to existing College operations. The plan should be tested annually and updated as needed to minimize impact to essential business operations.

List of Key Operational Priorities by Department

President:

- Internal communication

Human Resources:

- Legal, employee, and healthcare benefits
- Facilities management

Finance:

- Payroll
- Student payments and refunds
- Informational technology
- Compliance

Marketing:

- External communication

Enrollment Operations:

- Enrollment and field recruitment

Academics:

- All program departments

- Student services, registration, and admissions
- Student support services
- Continuous improvement
- Indy and Dallas office mail

Relocation/Alternative Business Strategy

As of March 16, 2020, to ensure the safety and wellness of ACE faculty and staff, the following protocols are effective immediately.

- All ACE-related business travel has been cancelled through April. This helps not only ACE but the country as we hope to limit the long-term impact of COVID-19. We will revisit and adjust this policy as needed.
- Dallas and Indy offices: The office spaces will remain open and accessible if the buildings are open. All staff should use their best judgement about whether they need to come into the office or if they can work remotely. Offices are being cleaned regularly. Anyone that chooses to come into the office must use disinfectant wipes to wipe down their workstations before leaving each day.
- All employees are asked to use the required/optional selections for meetings to maintain productivity.
- We encourage as much video conferencing as possible with our important meetings. In this time of social distancing and forced isolation, “seeing” each other will be important.

In addition, we are working in real-time on the following topics that impact our faculty and staff:

- We are drafting an Emergency Sick Leave Policy specific to the current circumstances. We hope to have this policy, which will incorporate new federal guidelines and/or rules, distributed by the end of the week.
- We have an especially strong commitment to continued flexibility regarding all things ACE. This is a very fluid and ever-changing situation, and we will change along with it when necessary and appropriate.

ACE’s information technology solutions for students, faculty, and staff are hosted in third-party, tier-4 datacenters, which have the following documented and tested business continuity and disaster recovery processes, to maintain ongoing operations during periods of temporary or permanent service interruption:

- Fully redundant power, cooling, network, server, and storage solutions at the primary datacenter and equivalent off-site datacenter resources that can be utilized in the event of a disaster preventing access to the primary datacenter.

- Secured, remote access for both primary and secondary datacenter support and maintenance.
- Skeleton staffing for emergency actions that require in-person resolution (e.g., physical device maintenance).

If Indianapolis/Dallas offices are closed due to a crisis, employees will move to a fully online work at home scenario. This will be communicated via email to all faculty and staff. All core functions at American College of Education can be completed remotely except for mail processing. We have designated employees in each city that can gather and scan in all mail.

Crisis Communication Plan

The president has final sign-off on all college-wide communications.

Communication owners:

- College and Board of Trustees: President
- Students: SVP, Academic Affairs
- Field Partners: SVP, Enrollment Operations
- Non-profit Partners: VP, Human Resources
- Public facing: Marketing

Communication platforms:

- Skype/Teams for small internal meetings
- Zoom for large internal meetings and all external meetings
- Canvas, with Zoom embedded and enabled, for students
- Soft phones and cell phones as needed
- SMS/Text messages for students and staff
- Website, email, social media, and/or press releases for public-facing announcements

Continuity of Instruction and Support Services

The college is in constant communication with our students throughout this pandemic. All courses are already online, so continuity of instruction is expected. However, faculty are working with students to extend due dates this term as we recognize so much of their personal lives are being disrupted. With most of our students working in education or healthcare, they are at the epicenter of this crisis and need as much support as possible.

The College is following the advice of the state boards of education where it is approved to adjust requirements, if needed, to accommodate students. Additionally, the College is working with applicants to the college who are impacted by cancelled tests or closed offices, schools, or districts. We are ensuring the harm to our students and applicants are as minimal as possible.

Each student is presently assigned to a Student Success Coach, which is his/her main point of contact. In addition, we are sending out resources that can help our educators quickly move to an e-learning environment, along with tips for remote working. We are sending similar, appropriate resources to our healthcare students. Our Office of Academic Excellence stands at the ready to help any student with additional support services.

With all services already offered online, continuity is continued for student courses, schedules, payments, refunds, and transcripts.

Continuity of Operations

With a largely remote workforce, the college can operate as normally with minimal disruption. All pertinent student-facing resources are already online: enrollment counseling, admissions, registration, bursar payments/refunds, courses, the library, and student support services.

We have our headquarters in Indianapolis, and a small Dallas office. Both offices will remain open and accessible if the building remains open. We have back-ups in place should our normal employees that open the office or check the mail be unable to do so. In the event of a building closure, members of the IT helpdesk team will take hardware and shipping supplies home in order to tend to any hardware replacement and/or deployment needs for the college. Our faculty are 100% remote, and thus they can continue to deliver instruction and support students as they normally would, supported by our remote teams.