



**Covid-19 Staff Forum
with Mary Opperman, VP and CHRO**

Wednesday, March 18th, 2020

[Adam Howell:] Gina is saying that they're working on it, but they don't know, they don't have an ETA. Not necessarily being close to be able to expand it. Looks like maybe we will either have to maybe hold another one. CIT is working on the problem right now. So, with that in mind, Mary, are you okay with going ahead and then we'll maybe follow up with another one?

[Mary Opperman:] Sure, of course. We'll do whatever you think is best.

[Adam Howell:] Okay. So, I apologize for this, everyone. We'll have to put together another one, set it up as a webinar likely. But to those of you who are here, thank you for joining us. As you can tell, this is somewhat of an unprecedented situation and we're all working through it the best we can. On the Employee Assembly, we're not used to having such a large digital forum, so we set it up one way and we should have probably set this up as a webinar. We will march forward and do what we can and try to get some good information out. We'll also make sure that this is recorded so that we can get that out to folks as well.

For those of you joining us, I'm Adam Howell. I am the Chair of the Employee Assembly for the 2019/2020 term, as well as the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Representative. Thank you for being here. Those of you who could get in. And I hope that this helps. This is very uncertain time for folks. There's a good amount of anxiety and likely many questions. And we're hopeful this forum will help you answer some of those. What we're going to do it we will ask you all, first of all, to mute your microphone and then how we'll proceed is you can either type in your questions in it the chat log or what we will do is you can use the raise your hand function in the side bar and we'll recognize you to have these questions be asked for Mary. And I guess I should also mention Vice President of Human Resources, Mary Opperman, is with us and she'll be fielding questions. Thank you, Mary, for taking the time to be here. And just I know that this is going to be a big help and hopefully we'll get a lot of good information out for folks.

Hei Hei Depew, Vice-Chair to the Employee Assembly, will be taking down your questions if you type in the chat log or recognizing you. Gina Giambattista, Director of the Office of the Assemblies, will also be assisting with this. She may be working on trying to open up the zoom meeting for others, so Hei Hei, you may just be doing this on your own for right now, but we'll see.

So with that, Mary, I'll turn it over to you. I'm sure you have a few remarks you want to make and then we'll open it up for questions.

[Mary Opperman:] Thanks, Adam. I do have some remarks I want to make, but I really appreciate that the employee assembly did this and the fact that we're having some technical difficulties is actually a moment to reflect on how we deal with things that disappoint us. So, I know that people wanted to get in, but I'd also just take a moment to thank the Employee Assembly and the Office of the Assemblies for putting this together on less than 24 hours notice. We learn each time we try something, and I just want to say to the Assemblies Office and to the EA, thank you very much. I appreciate this.

So I'm going to make a few remarks and then we can open this up for questions. Let me start by saying that this is truly an unprecedented situation. As many of you know, I'm far along in my career and I've been through many situations that when I was in them, I thought they were unique and different and I didn't know how to handle them. I was at another university when the AIDS epidemic hit and the reaction of people in the workplace and how that evolved. I was here through

9/11 and for the great recession, and each time I said to myself, this is the most challenging thing I've ever dealt with. And here we are again dealing with something that is truly unprecedented. The whole world is trying to grapple with the emerging understanding of what COVID-19 means and what it means for us.

We're working our way through this here at Cornell in a thoughtful and careful way, yet we are moving quickly, because the situation warrants it. We have, right from the start, prioritized the health of our community and President Pollack and our leadership team have made some very difficult and courageous decisions, including sending people home in order to de-densify our campus. When we moved to remote work, most of our staff, we moved to remote work and most of our staff have either moved into remote working or will be doing season. But not all of our work can be done remotely, and in those cases, our leaders are assessing what work still needs to be done and how best to do it. Since this pandemic first became known to us, we have been trying to respond to issues as we understand them. One of the things about this health crisis is what we knew and understood yesterday may have changed today. So, we've been focused on the issues right in front of us. And let me give just a few examples. And these are just a few.

On March 10th, that was ten days ago, we decided that it was best for students to leave campus and we made the decision that they should not return after spring break, which would begin on March 27th, and that instruction would begin online after break. Three days later, it became clear that it was not in the best interest of our students or the campus community for the students to remain on campus until March 27th. And so, we made the decision to suspend classes at the end of that day and asked students to begin to leave for home. That significant change happened in three days. At the end of that day on March 13th, all K-12 schools in the county closed through April 12th. Other counties soon followed. On March 16th, 3 days later, the governor ordered that all food establishments must move to takeout only by 8:00 p.m. that night and the crowd capacity was reduced to 50 people. Yesterday, March 17th, daycare centers in the County were ordered to close for all but healthcare workers and first responders. Many of you have probably felt like you've been in this situation for a very long time, but in fact, we've been in this situation for less than two weeks. And so, here's what I've learned. What we decided to may be outdated by tomorrow. It's very hard to communicate clearly in a rapidly changing environment, because it's hard for folks to keep up. And it only takes missing one message for your understanding to be outdated. And that's absolutely okay. People are doing the best they can.

I've learned that people deal with ambiguity and stress differently. So, their reactions to this situation are different. For most of us, the enormity of the pandemic is hard to grasp and we find that some people are searching for simple answers to complex or even unknown questions. This also is completely understandable. It is a way of coping with something that we cannot control. And I've learned that sometimes we just need to slow down, reach out to our friends, our family, and our colleagues, and take a deep breath, even though we don't really know what's coming next. We have no answers for how long this is going to go on. What we are doing is learning as much as we can and responding as best we can to a changing situation. But we are committed to getting through this and getting through this together. Can you all still see me?

[Participant:] Yes, we can.

[Mary Opperman:] You can?

[Participant:] Yes.

[Mary Opperman:] Sorry. Something just happened. So, I'm going to keep on going in case there are still people out there. Here's what I would ask of all of you. Take care of yourselves. I hope by now you all know how to protect yourself by washing your hands, refraining from common practices such as shaking hands, and you should all be practicing social distancing to the best of your ability. And also take care of your personal well-being as best you can. Plan to the extent you are able. Be mindful of your eating habits. Get outside and breathe the fresh air. Move around. And get some rest. As the president says to me, this is going to be a marathon, not a sprint. And let me say one other thing before I turn it over for questions, I have spoken to so many staff and faculty and leaders over the last nine days. Some of them are struggling to put this into a place that they can understand and deal with, so they are understandably looking for sometimes, looking for someone to give them answers that we don't have and in some cases, because they don't know what else to do, they're looking for someone to blame, and I can understand that. I want a human nature to try to make sense of such a unique and challenging and changing situation, and at least for a while being angry is a release of energy, and there's something really healthy about that.

I'm asking you, though, to be mindful of the impact that anger and negativity have on your own well-being, because in the long run you need to take care of yourself and find a way to do that that is healthy and sustaining. So, I'm going to open up to questions now and I'll do my best to answer them, but please understand in some cases my answer is we don't know or we're working on it. So with that, I'm going to turn this back to Adam and we can open it up for questions.

[Adam Howell:] Okay. Again, thank you, Mary. We really appreciate this, especially as we're seeing in the face of trying to adapt to an unknown situation. This is very helpful. For everybody, again, if you have questions, please do one of two things. Use the raise your hand function or type it in the chat log. Hei Hei, I will turn it over to you to start fielding some questions for Mary.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you, Adam. So, we collected some questions that have come through chat, either privately to me or to everyone and also some questions that have been submitted through e-mail. One of the questions we have, Mary, and thank you so much for your time, I think everybody appreciates, you know, this opportunity to engage with you, the first question that we have is as students leave campus, this negatively impacts the staff these to provide services for said students. We're thinking dining facilities. Many staff members, particularly wage workers who cannot perform their jobs remotely, may be subject to loss of hours, work. I know that we've added health and personal days, but this is ten days and students are gone for the rest of the semester. Can you shed some light on maybe the preparations or discussions being made to accommodate a loss of demand for these types of staff members, particularly wage workers who cannot perform their jobs remotely, you know, discussions beyond the ten additional days, which I think is pretty generous, but again this doesn't cover much of the spirit of time when the students are gone.

[Mary Opperman:] Yep. So, it's a great question and it's one I completely understand. Right this we don't have answers to that right now. Here's what we're doing. We're taking a look at work that we do need to have campus. We need to figure out how long we need that work done for. We're also looking at other types of work that we are, our service workers and others who are, I don't know, do. And we're accessing on a regular basis how long we can continue to find meaningful work. So, I don't have an answer to that, although it's an understandable question, because we're

kind of going day by day as things change and we're trying to, as best we can, keep the workers and their best interests in the forefront of our minds as we do that.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you. We also have a question from Jamie who is an EA member who wants to know what steps in the central university administration are being taken to ensure that all units, departments are providing their staff with guidance and instructions that meet the federal/state recommendations with regards to workplace conditions?

[Mary Opperman:] Hei Hei this may be related to those who have to be on campus, but if not would you clarify it so I'm answering the right question? But here's what we are doing. We meet at least once a week with all of the college HR and business officers. They have been, since believe it or not, liking last week or actually it might have been Investigators before, trying to develop their remote work strategies and their on-campus needs. Again, I just want to say that what we knew when we started the planning, what we expected to have happen is very different than what's happening today. So. each time something changes, the plans have to be adjusted, so the answer is yes, we are trying to -- and I know I talked to the HR people every other day. They're all looking -- they're all developing their staffing plans, working with people to make sure that those who are remote have the right equipment, working on social distancing for those who are here.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you. I have several questions from Brian Goodell. I want to touch on some of them. I think one is related to the question that Jamie asked. I believe that the question was posed, why doesn't Cornell just shut down, period. Front line workers are concerned, because they feel that they still have to go to work every day, because they can't work remotely. Trades, building care, front line workers don't feel safe. They also feel they're taking a chance by going to work and returning to their families and possibly exposing themselves. Many members, you know, in this field have family members who are in higher risk group groups. That is the question. Why doesn't Cornell shut down, period?

[Mary Opperman:] The university is not shutting down. We are definitely in a reduced operations capacity, but at this point our intention is to continue to operate. Let me speak specifically to the question that Brian has asked, which is if people do not feel safe coming to work, can we develop an alternate strategy for them and the answer is, Brian, we will try our very best. For folks who, in the short-term, who feel that they can't come into work, they should contact their supervisor or their local HR person and we will work with them to find another arrangement for them or they can take their time that we've put into their bank. In the longer-term, we're trying to figure exactly that out. We're trying to figure out what services need to be here and how best to get them accomplished. These are very understandable questions that you all have. But for me to give you a simple answer to an incredibly complex situation would just be irresponsible of me. We're working on it we're continuing to work on it. This is a 24/7 effort on our part to do the right thing by people. If individuals have specific issues and they don't feel comfortable talking to anyone else, I'm pretty much here all the time. They could call me.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you for making yourself available. We have a question to everyone. What actions are specifically being addressed for essential staff, support, and safety if they have to work on-site? I think a lot of the questions that are come this go are this regards to staff members who feel the nature of their work requires to them to be at work and provide that support, whether they're cleaning items, cleaning facilities and they don't feel safe doing so. What is your guidance to that?

[Mary Opperman:] So they should be practicing all of their safety requirements. If they include wearing gloves to do their cleaning, wear gloves. They should be washing their hands frequently. They should be social distancing. What does that mean? If they are needing to clean and there are still people in that building, they should make every effort to stay 3 to 6 feet away from individuals while they do that. If that is difficult for them to do in their environment and they feel that they are at risk, they need to talk to their supervisor. If they're not getting help from their supervisor, they should talk to their HR person.

The best way to handle these concerns is really one by one in the environments that they're in. So, in some environments, the buildings are almost emptied out. And so, there's very little risk in terms of social distancing. People are practicing good hygiene and watching their hands on a regular basis. There is no one in the building or very few people in the building. Will be able to practice social distancing. That said, right now we are trying to get instruction online, and it is not always possible while they're doing that for them to fully practice social distancing. And if they have concerns, then we want to try to mitigate those. What we need to know about them in order to do that.

[Anthony McCabe:] Mary, this is Tony McCabe could I add a comment to that? In FCS Building Care, I have thirty employees at my clock and what we're doing is staggering start times so that we're abiding way the less than ten people at a time. So, we're adapting and we feel that as they understand the student population that's going to remain, that will establish our priorities and we're actually able to maintain the social distancing guidelines here, and that was just worded out yesterday.

[Mary Opperman:] Thank you.

[Hei Hei Depew:] I have a 2-part question. One is from Laura Santacross. Is there estimate to the number of students who will remain in Ithaca in campus housing and off campus housing? And Francesca says there's a call for volunteers to help students move out. What tools are provided to volunteers to ensure that they're doing this safely, especially since so many parents may come from out of town to pick up students. Do you know how many students still remain? How many students have moved out? And what are the tools provided?

[Mary Opperman:] Okay. So even if I wasn't really tired I could never have remembered all of those parts to that one question. So, I'm going to start and then, Hei Hei, you can prompt me. I'm not sure I remember the beginning. Let me give this a try and then you can prompt me for the different elements of this. We don't yet know how many students will remain in campus housing. The number we originally had is changing. Some people that expected they would need to stay in on campus housing are now going home or elsewhere. And others who felt they could go home or go elsewhere are indicating that they need to stay. It will still be fractional in comparison to the number of students on campus in normal times.

In terms of off campus, it's a very good question. People who are in off campus parents, what we can do is limit their time ask the way they interact on campus, but they have private leases and those are the decisions that they would make as a private lease holder. We know some are leaving and we expect that some are staying. I'm sorry. What are the other pieces of that question?

[Hei Hei Depew:] They wanted to know an estimate. Sounds like numbers wise we don't have an exact count, and it's kind of hard to know which students are living off campus. There's also been a call for volunteers to help move students out. What tools are being provided to volunteers to ensure that they do this safely? So many students are coming from out of town.

[Mary Opperman:] Great question. So, campus life will give safety instructions for how to help. I was around this past weekend and I can tell you they're asking the parents not to go into the residence halls. They are bringing the stuff that was in the room out. They're doing everything they can to not have the parents go in. And that's been working actually pretty well. The other thing I would say is we -- I think we have had a pretty steady -- more than a trickle, but a pretty steady number of parents coming through, so they haven't been as inundated in any one day. That also helps with social distancing.

[Anthony McCabe:] Mary, this is Tony again. If I could comment on housing. As of the end of the day yesterday, 50% of the students on campus have left, and there really hasn't been a lot of chaos. Parents are coming, as you said. There are signs. Parents and visitors should not go into the buildings. So, it's been quite orderly. So, the big move out is scheduled for this Friday and this weekend. So, we'll have extra staff in on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, but it's been really orderly and I haven't seen any large groups of people. So, it's been going pretty well so far.

[Mary Opperman:] Great. Thank you.

[Adam Howell:] So really quickly, I just have a brief announcement about the meeting. We anticipate being able to add a few hundred more people to this particular zoom meeting and we'll probably have to set up another one correctly as a webinar very briefly in the future. I know that there are people listening in on other folks' computers and such. If you have your own questions, we'll try to get something set up correctly in the future. And just as a reminder, please don't ask direct questions -- please type your questions in the chat or raise your hand to speak and we'll try to get to you. So that's just a quick announcement about this. And again, sorry for the technical difficulties, everybody.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thanks. So, I'm just continuing on the questions that we've been collecting right now. One of the questions that came in, temp employees are not eligible for personal sick time. Are there plans to provide a safety net for those employees in the event they may get sick?

[Mary Opperman:] Yep. Let me say there's a lot of concern in general for everyone, and I completely understand that and I appreciate that. We are trying as best we can to figure out how to take care of our folks as much as we can for as long as we can. Temp and casuals without benefits don't get sick and vacation days, and right now there is no plan to do that.

[Hei Hei Depew:] More questions are coming in. We received one question from Joshua Holden. Will the UAW staff be able to collect unemployment?

[Mary Opperman:] So if there is a lack of work and the UAW staff are furloughed, we're working right now with the unemployment compensation office, and you can imagine that they are inundated, so it's a little hard to get information, to understand what benefits would be available if that were to come to pass.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you. We received one question. If staff members are negative financially impacted by COVID-19 due to loss of wages, whether that is from self-quarantine, loss of demand from the employer, can they tap into any emergency funds? Are there any plans or discussions ongoing for these staff members?

[Mary Opperman:] Let me answer that question in two ways. One, we're looking at what we can do here at the university. But the other I think is a really important thing to say in general. This is a situation the entire globe has never dealt with. Italy is dealing with these circumstances. We are not going to be able to get through this and out the other side simply and only from the efforts of individual employers. It just isn't going to be able to happen. And while we need the kinds of responses we are starting to see from the state and federal governments in order to be able to get ourselves through in it a manner that will allow all organizations, including Cornell, to be able to get back to business when this subsides, and so we are doing the very, very best we can. And I just want to say, I've been in this community a long time and I completely understand and actually appreciate the high standard that our community and our workforce holds under the circumstances to, but there are -- this is an unprecedented situation. Completely unprecedented. And we're going to need the kinds of help that's coming from the government. So, as those become available, and I'm confident that they will, we'll make sure that we let people know what those are and how they affect our workforce.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you. We received a question from Michelle Podalack. I supervise a team of hourly employees. Will the university be coming out with additional guidelines on working at home for hourly employees? Can we allow team members' expanded work hours? Our team members are vital to supporting the transition to virtual for staff. I'd like to make sure my team members can meet the heavy workload in it the transition while still accepting the fact their children may need daytime attention that may impact the staff's ability to work full time, 8:00 o'clock to 4:30, ten extra days of HAP is very generous, but I need to be able to use as many work hours as possible for our team's transition to virtual.

[Mary Opperman:] Hourly workers can, indeed, work remotely. And that information is already on the HR website about remote work. If you have other questions, though, specific questions about how to set that up, and they're not answered on the website, send me an e-mail and I will get you to the right person. But yes, we absolutely can have hourly workers work from home. They must track their hours. Yes, you can be flexible in how those hours are collected, but they must track their hours. So, look on the website. See if what we have there answers your question. If it doesn't, then send me an e-mail and I'm happy to get you to the right person.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you. One question about the ten HAP days. Is there expiration date on using these ten sick days?

[Mary Opperman:] We just haven't gotten that far yet. I think that we'll all be very happy if, in it the outcome, we have ten sick days that no one had to use for either themselves or anyone else. That will be a nice problem to have. Right now, we are focused on what's in front of us and what's in front of us is trying to make the current situation as doable as possible.

[Hei Hei Depew:] The campus life division has been sending e-mails with the expectation that staff are expected to be working on campus. The person submitting this, who wants to remain anonymous, is in this division and my position is not considered essential. I have been on campus

this week with no official timeline to be transitioned to work from home. Meanwhile, I am seeing the remainder of campus desolate of in person workers with administrative meetings being handled through Zoom. Can units be re-encouraged to quickly transition nonessential workers to work remotely and is there an expectation to make staffing plans due Friday that nonessential staff are to physically report to work?

[Mary Opperman:] So I will follow up on their staffing plans. I had several conversations with them as you can imagine. Student and Campus Life is on the front lines of trying to get our students moved out. So, they have understandably been trying to prioritize where the efforts of the leaders go. As I said in opening remarks, we have one set of understanding for how we do our dining, and then in one day, because of the change in state regulations losses, we had to move to takeout. When each of those things happens, what we find is that we just stop where we are. We have to go back and look at everything we thought we were going to do and replan. So, I know that student and campus life is working on their staffing plans and their remote plans. If you haven't heard yet how that's going to impact you, you can send a message to their HR people or send me an e-mail and I'll get it to the right person, but I know they're working on it.

[Hei Hei Depew:] For colleges requiring faculty to come to campus April 6 to do lectures, how are staff who must support them be protected some I think we're getting these questions about people who are doing research. We're getting questions about people who have to support faculty staff.

[Mary Opperman:] Just a quick recap of what I said before. So the situations are changing daily. For example, in research, we're winding -- we're putting on pause a lot of our research because of social distancing issues. And those plans are really just starting to form, because that decision was made over the weekend. In terms of the staff needed to move faculty to virtual teaching, I do expect that some of that right now really does need somebody there to make sure it's set up, and it may be that those faculty will do their classes from their offices or from classrooms. And we are talking right now about the extent to which that support, that technical support needs to be on premise and how much of that technical support can be done remotely.

[Hei Hei Depew:] We received a question from Scott Burke. Is the pandemic creating any new jobs at Cornell? Perhaps at IT? If so, what are the jobs? What are ways that the pandemic is making Cornell University stronger? Are there anyways we can volunteer to help?

[Mary Opperman:] What a wonderful question. Thank you so much. To date, we haven't come up with new jobs, but I think in time we may find some new opportunities and new assignments, so stay tuned. I will tell you if we do ask for people to volunteer to take on new responsibilities, we're going to do that through the talent marketplace and a gig. So more to come. We haven't gotten to that place yet.

I will say, let me tell you personally how I think this is making us stronger. First of all, the leadership team is working around the clock to try to address issues that come up. I have seen heroes across this campus who have gone above and beyond to support each other, to support our students, and I know that in some cases it's frightening to be in situations where the students and their families are, and that's completely understandable. But I would just ask us all to remember that they're scared, too, and for our seniors, this was the end of their senior year and this is not at all what they expected. So, I guess what I would say is I feel a sense of pride in how hard everyone is trying to do the right thing for everyone, recognizing how many different priorities there are.

[Hei Hei Depew:] SASCL Becker asked in the event that our UA summer positions that we've already signed up for are eliminated, will we be guaranteed any sort of compensation? Because we were guaranteed summer work when we signed our contract.

[Mary Opperman:] Yep, I understand. There were a lot of things we expected to be handled in a different way on March 5th than what we're dealing with now. We will get to summer work. We are just are not there yet. I understand the concern. We have it on the radar and we'll get to it. If we can't fulfill our summer expectations, we'll see what we can do to address that. We just are not there yet.

[Hei Hei Depew:] I know that you addressed this before. We're receiving more staff members indicating that again if an employee doesn't feel comfortable, an example of isolation rooms was given, they shouldn't be required to clean those others. They feel they might have retaliation if they refuse. Can you reassure the employees they won't be retaliated against if they see it as an unnecessary health risk?

[Mary Opperman:] Let me start this answer by saying I'm not a health professional and so I just want to be really clear here about what I am saying is being guided by what we are learning from health professionals. We are not putting anyone in situations that the Health Department has indicated we should not put them in. That said, individual individuals' own comfort with this unknown situation is different. And so what I think is if somebody really feels afraid, to first and foremost talk with someone to figure out why. It may be that they don't have all of the information they need to make that decision for themselves. It is the case that there's a lot of information swirling around about the virus and about how to get it, most of which is speculation on the part of others. And so we have made our decisions and we have pretty carefully stuck to this based on what the Health Department has told us. With you if an individual is still concerned, we should first and foremost talk to their supervisor and express their concerns. Of course there are situations where people are afraid to do that, but everyone right now is trying to come to terms with something we've never dealt with before, and I have confidence that our supervisors will understand if someone is just worried and can't figure out exactly what they should do. If they're thought comfortable doing that, hopefully they are comfortable going to someone else, a manager above that individual, a manager above that, the HR person, someone who can help them talk through these. My general advice to everyone is take a deep breath and try to figure out where your reaction is coming from. If it is coming from a place where you need more information, let's help you get that information. That's totally, totally understandable. If it's coming from a place where you believe you have the information and you need to act, then let's figure out how to help you do that.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you. We have a question online that asks, do you anticipate a mandate for nonessential staff to be required to work? Is there an expectation from the unit staffing plans through Friday that nonessential staff are to physically report to work?

[Mary Opperman:] So let me start by saying that we don't identify essential people. We identify essential functions. And the essential functions that the colleges and units are determining are those that then, after we've identified the essential functions, we're trying to figure out how to get them done. So, in some cases, they can be done remotely. And in other cases, the only way to perform those functions is on campus.

So we do expect and have seen the staffing plans coming in that are clearly identifying the work that must be done on campuses and how they are going to get that accomplished. Did I answer that question? I'm not sure I did.

[Hei Hei Depew:] I think so. If anybody has any follow-up questions about that, they can e-mail me or submit it in the chat.

Another question that came in through Brian Goodell, I have a question about front line staff. If the only reason they were here is because Cornell thinks they're expendable, can you reassure them after it that they're at Cornell because they're irreplaceable? Not expendable? I think that's the sense of some staff members. Yes.

[Mary Opperman:] That makes me really sad that that's how someone would feel. The university has worked so hard to prioritize its workforce and to try to find ways to keep people in pay as long as we possibly can. That for someone to feel that the fact that we're trying to do that is because we of course they're expendable, it's really sad. I just have to say it makes me really sad. What I would say is we're working very hard to try to find meaningful opportunities for people to continue to perform services that we need done in a time where a lot of things are slowing down. So, if the individuals that work on our campus, those who are working in grounds and in housekeeping and custodial and dining are very important members of this community. They help with our buildings and our people, our students and our spaces, and we have such a sense of obligation to them that we're doing the best we can to try to keep them in a job that needs to get done. And I would just implore those of you who are in positions where you can help people, find a space there's healthy and resilient to work through those feelings of anger and upset so that they can come to a place where they're not looking at the actions taken in the worst possible way, but whether generosity of heart and spirit and that this the healthiest way for all of them to get through this together.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Okay. I think to counter that, I think there's been a lot of tremendous response from staff members to say the response has been very effective, very efficient, very quick, and there have been a lot of comments encouraging the university and thanking them for all the steps that have been taken, from the HAP to the communication. They want to thank you. They have asked earlier, knowing there's a lot of appreciation from staff members to yourself and to Martha for the steps being taken and also a lot of questions I'm really glad we have this forum to try to answer those. Moving on to another question. For those who pay to park and are not coming back to work, will we be credited and not charged for the parking fee?

[Mary Opperman:] I don't know. We'll take it to transportation and ask.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you. We have a question from online. Are there any plans to make empty student housing available to healthcare organizations or potential facility overflow if the situation worsens?

[Mary Opperman:] That's a great question and I saw that on the news. That's something we haven't dealt with in Upstate New York. Our campuses in downstate is very different than what we're dealing with here. So, our medical college, be our Dean and our faculty and our staff who are working on the front lines are true heroes, and you should be really proud to be their colleagues. They are dealing with just an unbelievable situation and they're doing a fantastic job. This is really I

think mostly a campus conversation, but our leadership at Cornell tech has quickly ramped up a remote work situation. Our medical college is trying as best they can to get people who can do remote work off. Their doctors and nurses and technicians are busy in the hospitals trying to deal with a situation that really is not at all like what we're dealing with here at this time. And they're doing an amazing job. So, I don't think we've had that situation happen here.

[Hei Hei Depew:] From Lisa Dean, are you moving students to one building that will be remaining or are the students be being scattered throughout several buildings?

[Mary Opperman:] Actually, that's a great question. I thought that question might come up and I don't know the answer to it, but it's a really good question. I know that they've been trying to figure out – they wouldn't squash them all to the same building. This whole idea is to create social distancing, but I don't know whether or not they might disburse them into more than one. And I don't think they're really going to know that until they see how many are staying.

[Hei Hei Depew:] If somebody that has to go to Cornell for one reason or another, will they be ticketed if they park in a spot without the appropriate parking pass?

[Mary Opperman:] I know the question -- I thought that had been addressed. Let us check. I thought they had relaxed the parking. Let's make sure that's been done. Yes. And I believe they have relaxed them. And so if you haven't seen that, we'll make sure that you can find them. I believe that they've relaxed the parking restrictions until April 19th.

[Anthony McCabe:] Mary, it did come out today. The only thing that's prohibited is handicapped parking. No parking assigned. So if you don't have a permit or a lesser permit, you can Park in any permitted parking spot.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Thank you. Another question we received online from Leila Ellis, is if there's a shortage of, say, dining work, or could somebody come in to put an hours with the grounds department botanic gardens, would it be possible to fill in those gaps where appropriate?

[Mary Opperman:] Again, we're not quite there yet, but once we have a sense of our staffing, we may very well be calling for people to volunteer to take other assignments, and if we do that, we put that call out through workday and we use that opportunity marketplace, and in it there's sort of a gig request and we'll put them in as gig requests. If we do that, because that all sounds like something from another country to should have us, we'll make sure that we give lots of information about that and walk you through how to do that. But it may be that we have that situation and we'll thank you for asking that. Yeah.

[Hei Hei Depew:] What are some preparations being made to alleviate any negative long term impacts to the staff?

[Mary Opperman:] I just saw a question come through. Gigs are generally unpaid. So we're just using the gig technology. That's a good question. Thank you for clarifying it. We're just using the gig technology as a way to put the call out and get the information. It's not a gig in the way we use them for professional development. I'm sorry. I just wanted to clarify.

[Hei Hei Depew:] That's fine. Thank you for clarifying. So the question was what do you project are the long term impacts to alleviate any long term negative impacts to the staff.

[Mary Opperman:] I wish I knew. I think we're all watching and reading. We don't know what the long term impacts of COVID-19 are, and I'm not a public health professional. And for me to give you a sense of what I think that would be would just be me repeating what I've read or heard from others. I want you to remain as strong of a community as we can.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Does Mary know when a staff member event eventually is diagnosed with a positive case how the healthcare department wants to make sure colleagues are detected to make sure others aren't exposed?

[Mary Opperman:] That's a great question and I had on my list to address this. I will just stop to say this is all I've done for six months. As I looked at the calendar, it's been less than two weeks. When I first started realizing that we had to develop plans there were no test kits available anywhere. So it was very few people were being tested. Now the test kits are starting to come out and more people are being tested. We are getting way more questions, because of that, which is good. I'm glad those questions are coming. If a positive test, if someone on the campus is tested positive, the Health Department contacts us ask contacts them and they work with a person to develop what I believe they called a contact map. And that contact map allows the Health Department directly, not us, directly to of this the individuals who have been in contact with that individual. For us, if we were to be informed, we would not be informed of who it is. That person may choose to tell us, but the Health Department would not. That's my understanding.

[Hei Hei Depew:] It seems like some people have been able to join this chat, so might have missed some of the questions asked earlier, so I apologize if any of this seems redundant. Received a question online. Other colleges and universities have relieved their custodial staff due to high risk environments, but Cornell has yet to send custodial staff at home. The risk with shaving this virus are children and parents is of paramount concern. When they come in at night, it is a huge risk. Is Cornell going to be moving to have custodians to stay home? If not, are there ways in which they are being protected with no masks being available? What is being done?

[Mary Opperman:] So, it's a great question, and let me just say that one of the reasons we de-densified the campus, people here can practice social distancing. And in social distancing and hand washing, the risk to an individual of being in a relatively low. Well, let me stop. I don't know that. I'm not a health professional. In order to increase the protection of individuals, if a custodian feels that he or she is unsafe in doing the work they're doing, implore them to talk to their supervisor. Implore them to do that. Also, please read the actual information that we have on our websites so that the best you can, you can separate for yourself what you're feeling that feels like fear and what you're feeling that feels like concerns you can get answers to. It will help you to figure out what you want to ask and what you want to do.

It is true that other places have made the decision to let go and stop paying the individuals that have been doing this work. To date we have tried to find ways as we have the we can to keep workers in pay as long as possible. And when we have work, we're asking people to do it. I understand that may feel very frightening to some of you. Please, if you want to, you can call me and talk to me. Let's figure out why. In we can understand why you're having that reaction, then maybe we can figure out what the best next step is for you.

[Anthony McCabe:] Mary, this is Tony again. Again, from Building and Care. Appreciate all of the concern for custodians, but just to share, for general knowledge, all custodians receive extensive training on cleaning, personal protective equipment. They have everything available to them: Masks, gloves, training procedures. There's special training being set up now for cleaning isolation rooms. And it's always, to my knowledge, custodians have always been able to vocalize if they feel that they're in if an unsafe situation. So, it's really appreciated, but another perspective is custodial staff kind of feel proud that, you know, they're seen as being essential and this is part of their daily mission and an extension of that. So not to speak for them, but that's a sense we get. And again, somebody says I'm not comfortable being here, they can go home. I don't feel I should do this, then don't do it. So yeah, custodians are not forced, nor would they be to do anything they're comfortable doing and they are totally properly prepared and trained to do what they do.

[Hei Hei Depew:] We have a question from Kathryn Burkgren online. Mary, can you please explain the purpose of the extra HAP days and when to use them? I've heard different ways people have been interpreting how to use HAP days.

[Mary Opperman:] Thanks for asking the question. They are added to your banks. For most of the campus, it's HAP pay. For some we have sick banks. So, what we've done is we've broadened the access to HAP to help your own, to care for someone in your care and for personal reasons. Those are just days. So, I do know that people are asking questions about that.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Some other questions we've been asked online, some people want to know what the likelihood of the university closing is. What would be the implication for their jobs?

[Mary Opperman:] Right. Not there yet. And so we are doing our very best to remain open and to continue to do the things what we can continues to do. I think that's very important for our workforce. We also think it's important for our ability to come back after this situation. But we just aren't there yet. Right now, we're open. We're continuing to do work and that's where we are today.

[Hei Hei Depew:] What advice do you have for those who, even though we're practicing social distancing, there might be times when they might have to congregate in the same space if there are time clocks that require people to be clocking in and these time clocks accommodate 30 plus people. What is your recommendation in instances like this? Both facilities and campuses services have made changes to the clocks so they can spread them out and not find them congregating at the clock. If you find yourself in the situation where you're not social distancing, remove yourself 6 feet away and have the conversation with the individual so we can provide for that next time. You're not perfect with this, but I know we're staggering start times and using social distancing as an expectation.

[Hei Hei Depew:] I think we're reaching about the end of the questions. And also probably the end of the allotted time. If anyone has any other questions, please submit to me via the chat. Again, I'm seeing a lot of individuals expressing their gratitude towards this opportunity to be able to engage. I know that there are technical difficulties that we've experienced, but I think a lot of this is growing things and trying to figure out how to make the necessary accommodations in these times that we're finding ourselves in. And things occurred that we were not anticipating, like the zoom room chat.

[Mary Opperman:] Can I say something before we all depart?

[Adam Howell:] Sure.

[Mary Opperman:] I just want to thank everybody. You know, when we open to questions, we get the hard questions and we get people's fears and anxieties, and I actually really actual grateful that people felt comfortable enough to answer those questions. I think it says a lot about our community. And I also want to thank you all for being so flexible and resilient during this time. It's very difficult to be dealing with something so unknown and filling out how to make all of these changes happen. How you're doing or why you're doing it. I just couldn't be prouder of everyone. I know we're making lots of mistakes and we're stumbling here and there and you're not getting all the information and I wasn't able to answer a lot of questions. But I really appreciate how dedicated everyone is and how much concern you're all showing for each other and I ask you to continue that and also to please, please take care of yourselves. Please take care of yourselves. Do things that help you see how to kind of breathe through a situation that none of us have ever been through before. So, it's just my parting words are ones of gratitude and admiration.

[Hei Hei Depew:] Some last minute questions. Some individuals have asked if there are any plans to address any potential burnout in the future from staff members who have been asked to work and who might be feeling some stress from that.

[Mary Opperman:] Yes. That's a great question. We're looking at things like how to manage the isolation of being remote. How to deal with this ongoing stress. And what you can look forward to is that we're looking at putting some short videos up, at least a couple of too tips a week, is some from me. Although you're probably sick of looking at me. Some from me, some from others with helpful tips and tools to try to deal with such a changing situation. The so when we do those, we'll try and make sure you all know where you are so you can see them. And if you have advice for other things we should be addressing, please let us know. Thank you.

[Adam Howell:] I guess to kind of wrap things up, Mary, I really want to thank you for your time, for being here and answering these questions. I know that it's a great help to everybody who was able to join us. And also, I apologize to everybody who could not get through. We're going to try to work through this. We're all dealing with this as an abnormal situation. So, we're going to try to see if we can -- what we can do for the future. And thank you to all the staff members joining us and just to echo Mary's comments to everybody else out there who are keeping the lights on and keeping things running as best as possible. What you do is truly appreciated. I think the staff are being great stewards of the university at a very trying time, and all of those efforts are truly appreciated.

Thank you all, once again. And hopefully we'll see if we can do something in the future, but I appreciated you all being here and joining us for this and staying healthy. Take care, everyone. Have a great rest of your week.

[Event Concludes]