



March 12, 2020

We have been following the coronavirus outbreak carefully, taking guidance from the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control, and the Vermont Health Department. Our top concern is the safety and health of our students, faculty, staff, and guests while making sure that academic programs at VCFA move forward as planned with as little disruption as possible. We are also mindful of the impact our choices can make in containing the virus for the general health of the population.

As we monitor this rapidly changing situation we will keep this page updated to inform our community on the actions we are taking as well as a dedicated email address for any questions you may have related to VCFA's coronavirus response: covid19@vcfa.edu.

Our mission statement says, "VCFA is a global community of artists continuously redefining what it means to be an arts college." In this moment, we are certainly feeling not only what it means to be a global community of artists, but to continuously redefine what it means to be an arts college. Because of the strong community spirit that has come to characterize VCFA, I am confident that together we will be able to meet the challenges necessary to respond to the realities imposed by this pandemic without compromising either the rigor of our academics, or the strong collegiality and connective tissue that has come to characterize all our programs.

ACTIONS TAKEN

April residencies will be held remotely. After careful consideration and planning, the leadership team at VCFA has made the decision to hold the April residencies for the MFA in Graphic Design and MFA in Film programs remotely. With students, faculty, and guests coming from across the country and around the world, holding a residency on campus could put everyone at unnecessary risk. We are also mindful that travel at this time increases the vulnerability of high-risk populations in all communities.

Please know this was a very hard decision to make and comes with deep regret. The residency experience is an integral part of our MFA program, one that offers not only intense learning, but intense connection. As we solidify plans, faculty and staff are keeping all aspects of the residency experience top of mind so that we can design a remote residency that will not only satisfy our students' academic needs, but will foster the strong sense of community and personal connection all students and faculty at VCFA have come to value and expect.

At this time, we are planning for summer residencies to proceed as scheduled. More details are below.

Preparations are being made for our residential program and onsite staff to work remotely. As of today there are no known or suspected cases of COVID-19 on campus. We are currently preparing for staff and students to be able to study and work remotely as we monitor the situation. Arrangements will be made for any student or staff person who is at high risk or feels uncomfortable attending classes or work at the present time. Please notify your program director or supervisor. We know that many of our residential students do not have another residence and we are creating a plan for your support should you contract the virus.

Campus retreats and events that bring in out-of-state guests will be canceled through May 31. Due to increased health risks associated with travel we have canceled the upcoming Young Adult Novel Retreat and alumna mini-residencies scheduled in March, April, and May. In addition, our residential program (the MFA in Writing & Publishing) will not host visiting writers and out-of-state modular faculty on campus for the remainder of the spring semester; these guests will instead participate remotely.

Summer international residencies for our MFA in Writing and WCYA programs have been canceled. Our MFA in Writing program's upcoming Trieste residency, as well as the MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults program's summer residency in Bath, have been canceled.

Campus Cleanliness. We have implemented an even stronger disinfecting protocol for our campus, including more frequent surface cleaning utilizing specific products that are non-toxic to humans but will kill both flu and COVID-19 viruses. We have placed hygiene recommendations throughout campus reminding people to wash their hands, to avoid touching their face, and to cover coughs and sneezes with something disposable. We will also be posting hands-off reminders across campus, discouraging hugs, handshakes, etc.

College-sponsored travel has been canceled. All non-essential college sponsored travel is suspended until further notice, and personal travel (particularly international travel) is being monitored.

College services are available remotely. We understand the seriousness of this rapidly changing situation can cause stress and anxiety while some in our community may even be the recipients of misplaced and hurtful actions. Our student services will remain available for your support.

Notify your supervisor or program director if you have been in one of the [highly affected areas](#) within the last month.

SUMMER RESIDENCY PREPAREDNESS

As mentioned above, at this time we are planning for summer residencies to proceed as scheduled. We are asking all students and faculty in those programs (MFA in Writing, MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults, International MFA in Creative Writing & Literary Translation, MFA in Visual Art, MFA in Music Composition, and MA in Art & Design Education) to move forward with their regular semester calendar and deadlines associated with housing forms, billing, leaves of absence, etc.

Over the next two weeks we will continue to monitor this rapidly changing situation, and identify a timeline for when decisions regarding holding summer residencies remotely will be made. We will share this timeline with students as soon as it is available. Our goal is to make decisions regarding summer residencies on a schedule that will allow adequate time for faculty and staff to prepare a remote residency and give students sufficient time to plan accordingly.

To all of our students, I know this is a lot to digest and I want to assure you that we are dedicating all of our resources and energy towards working on behalf of your education. We welcome your suggestions and input as we navigate these new waters together.

To our faculty, in my short tenure at the school, you have impressed me with your deep dedication to supporting our students in their journeys at VCFA. I realize this new situation will call on you to draw on that dedication in new ways. I thank you in advance for your support of our students and your hard work.

Staff, you are the continuity that keeps all our programs humming. We couldn't respond to this situation without your willingness to adapt and create solutions to new challenges. You have already and continue to serve our college with outstanding skill and dedication. Thank you.

Alumnx and friends, we know you care deeply about the school and any support you can offer to our students and your beloved faculty will be felt deeply.

Our faculty and staff have approached these decisions with the deep levels of care and concern that characterize our VCFA community. We are committed to making and communicating decisions as quickly as possible, and deeply appreciate your cooperation, understanding, and patience.