

**MARCH 2020**

**GEORGIA NONPUBLIC POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION**



Yesterday, Governor Kemp, acting in accordance with the Public Health State of Emergency due to the coronavirus, issued Executive Order 03.16.20.01 closing all public primary, secondary, and postsecondary schools until March 31, 2020. Following this order, all University System of Georgia (“USG”) colleges and universities in the state have moved all classes online for the rest of the semester, with extremely limited exceptions.

While this Executive Order and actions taken to date do not apply to any private postsecondary institutions, the Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (“NPEC”) directs all private postsecondary institutions in the state to make decisions regarding operations in accordance with Centers for Disease Control (“CDC”) guidelines, internal policies, and their best judgment to protect the health of students, staff, and other stakeholders, as well as the general public. Such decisions may include, but are not limited to, closing for a period of time, moving operations online temporarily, remaining open on a traditional schedule, or any combination of offerings. However, please be cognizant of President Trump’s March 16, 2020 recommendation and guidance that gathering of groups should be no larger than 10 people. As made clear by the President’s guidelines, the next fifteen (15) days are critical to slow the spread of coronavirus. Institutions participating in federal financial aid programs should also monitor and follow United States Department of Education (“ED”) guidance. Please closely and continually monitor updates from the President, Governor, CDC, and the Georgia Department of Public Health (“DPH”).

The Office of the Governor is encouraging all institutions that have the capabilities to move to web-based or remote learning to do so. However, any change in course programming must be reported to NPEC through your Regulatory Specialist, and these changes should only be temporary in nature unless a formal Program Change Application process is initiated. We advise that institutions make every effort to provide program offerings that align as closely as possible as those most recently approved by NPEC and advertised to students while protecting the safety of students and faculty. Should substantive changes to programmatic offerings be deemed appropriate, institutions should administer them at their own discretion being aware that students will still have the right to submit grievances to the institution and NPEC.

Again, we encourage institutions to be vigilant and take appropriate steps, such as regularly monitoring updates from the President, Governor, CDC, and DPH, and posting procedures for safe actions for students and staff concerning the status of COVID19 and other viruses.

Finally, if your institution has residence halls, we understand that it may not be feasible for all students to leave campus (i.e., international students or housing insecure). In those instances, please ensure that adequate campus resources remain active to ensure the safety and well-being for those students during the period of operational and instructional changes. If your institution has concerns about its ability to provide the required wrap-around services for on-campus students and has an immediate need for assistance, please let us know and our office will help direct you to resources.

For further questions or guidance, please call our office or reach out to your Regulatory Specialist. While most staff are working remotely, our agency remains open for business, and staff will continue to provide the same high-quality customer service you have grown accustomed to receiving over the years.

Please be mindful that this situation is evolving on an hourly basis. While NPEC will provide additional statements and guidance as possible, please carefully monitor and abide by federal and state governmental guidance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Shook".

Kirk Shook  
Executive Director