

UMKC confirms discounts for student fees

Sam Bellefy

News Editor

UMKC administration has confirmed they will credit 45% of the costs of parking permits, student activity fees, housing and meal plans back to student accounts.

In an email sent to the student body, the university stated that they are presenting the discounts as a form of financial relief for students during the coronavirus pandemic.

If a student has an outstanding balance on their account, the discounts will reduce that amount. If the balance is small enough (or the student does not owe anything to the university), the school will send a direct deposit or mailed check for the amount.

For parking, a 45% discount will apply to all passes purchased before Feb. 21. Those purchased after Feb. 21 will be refunded 100%.

For an unlimited spring parking pass, the 45% discount would be \$61.

The student activity fee, which is \$33.82 per semester, will be discounted by \$15.22.

The housing discount, which was offered before the others as an encouragement for students to move off-campus, will total 45% as well. However, it will only



A 45% discount will apply to parking, recreation, housing and dining fees. (AP Photo | Mark Lennihan)

apply to students who move out before April 3. The dollar amount of the discount varies greatly depending on the type of housing the student paid for.

Dining plan balances will carry over to the next semester if the student moves off-campus by April 3. Those who do not live on-campus or request an exception will get a 45% discount, which totals \$768 for the "15 Meal

Plan."

UMKC administration added that they are still determining their course of action for spring graduation. They are also determining if they will implement a pass/fail system for the semester's academic courses as a way to compensate for the shift to online-only learning.

"We appreciate your cooperation as we

work through this unexpected and unprecedented situation in a way that we believe is most fair to the greatest number of students," said the administration.

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UMKC student tests positive for coronavirus

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A UMKC student has tested positive for COVID-19, Chancellor Agrawal announced.

The student, who does not live on campus, is being treated in isolation.

Agrawal said the university is working closely with public health officials, who will reach out to those who may have had contact with the individual and help those found to be at risk.

"Although campus is now closed, UMKC continues to strongly encourage our campus community to follow the social distancing regulations now in effect in Missouri and Kansas," Agrawal said. "We know the growing number of cases nationally and in our region is concerning. While these concerns are understandable, it is extremely important to remain calm."

There are now 102 cases in Kansas City and over 900 statewide, including 12 deaths.

Students with questions or concerns can contact the Student Health and Wellness Center at 816-235-6133. More information is available on the [UMKC coronavirus web page](#).



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Enforcing the stay-at-home order

UNews speaks with the chief of KCPD

Adriana Macias

Staff Writer

Last week, city governments all around the Kansas City area issued stay-at-home orders. Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly followed suit yesterday, giving a stay-at-home order for the entire state.

With the exception of essential work (such as healthcare and food) or essential activities (like getting groceries), residents are required to stay in the homes until at least April 24. In addition, groups of 10 or more continue to be banned.

According to the Kansas City government, a violation of the order—which is considered a misdemeanor—can result in fines of up to \$500, six months jail time or business closures.



The streets of Kansas City are much emptier after a stay-at-home order was issued to all residents. (The Kansas City Star)

As the scope of the coronavirus pandemic rapidly develops and new ordinances pop up in a multitude of jurisdictions every day, the situation can become confusing. UNews spoke with KCPD Chief Richard Smith to get answers on how the police department will enforce the order.

“The enforcement of this order doesn’t fall under the police department, first off,” said Chief Smith. “It will be more up to city entities like the fire marshal. We will not be stopping people to ask for papers.”

“We’re asking people to have some personal responsibility to

stop the spread of the virus,” Smith said. “If we see restaurants violating the 10 or under limit or carryout-curb-side pick-up, it could affect future licenses. It is not our goal as law enforcement to fine or jail. It is to keep the city safe.”

He emphasized that the police department will not be drastically changing the way it conducts business to pursue quarantine violators. “Just minor adjustments to calls we think can be handled by phone,” he said.

Smith also said the Missouri National Guard, which was activated by Gov. Mike Parsons last week, is not going to implement martial law.

Smith added that the coronavirus situation is new territory for the police department, as well as for Kansas Citians.

“This is new to every first responder. New problems are coming out of this, and the information and problem solving is changing every day,” he said.

The police chief advised the public to remain cautious, as many rumors have easily spread in the fear and uncertainty of the present time. He urged those with questions to call 311 or to visit KCPD’s FAQ page.

As a final note, the department is asking for donations of masks (even hand-made), gloves, and temporal scanner thermometers (those used on the forehead) for first responders to use during the pandemic. Donations will be accepted at any district station and are greatly appreciated.

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COVID-19 campus closure poses challenges for lab, studio courses

Annie Bolin

Staff Writer

With UMKC’s campus now officially closed, lab and studio courses are heading in new directions.

The closure of all buildings on campus poses challenges for students working in science labs, taking studio art courses or who are enrolled in the Conservatory, as they no longer have access to these spaces for the remainder of the semester.

Instructors are working diligently to rewrite syllabi to conform to online instruction while also supporting their students under changing requirements and class structures.

Labs

Dr. Andrea Drew, Coordinator of Organic Chemistry Labs in the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, is determined to help her lab students adapt to the circumstances.

“It’s a partnership,” Drew said. She added that her students are nervous about the changes. “It’s brand new, they’re overwhelmed, but they’re pretty resilient, and they will adapt.”

Drew currently teaches six sections of CHEM 322L, Organic Chemistry Laboratory II. She said that the structure of her online labs will be similar to what they were before.

Drew’s lab students will watch videos and complete assignments before their lab, submit their work via Canvas, experience their lab live via Zoom, then submit their post-lab assignments.

According to Drew, her CHEM 322L sections had already completed six labs before the campus closure, with four remaining for the rest of the semester.

“We’re really lucky that this didn’t happen at the beginning of the semester,” Drew said. “Students got a good introduction to organic lab that way.”

According to Director of Undergraduate Curriculum in the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences Dr. Aaron Reed, these changes will not affect students’ degree progress in any way.

Reed said that course delivery will vary by course. According to Reed, some courses are utilizing freeware labs that allow students to complete their labs virtually through simulations, while others will rely on pre-recorded videos in which instructors conduct experiments.

“The situation is less than ideal, but



necessary,” Reed said. “We are doing our best to give our students a quality course while keeping them safe.”

Studio Art

For courses within the College of Arts and Sciences’ Art & Art History department, the challenges of online instruction vary by medium.

Elijah Gowin, chair of the studio art program, said that while art studio rooms and computer labs in the fine arts building will be closed to students, the situation could change after April 13.

Gowin, who teaches photography, said that this situation is challenging for those working on photography projects requiring use of spaces like the lighting studio. One way he is remedying this is by lending out equipment so that students can work from home.

Kati Toivanen teaches digital design and creative project development in the Art and Art History department. With all of her classes already online this semester, she has not had to make many changes to course requirements.

Toivanen’s main concern lies with her students’ well-being.

“We’ve discussed adjustments that should be made to minimize the stress and to make the work more manageable,” Toivanen said. “Some of them now have small children at home, others do not have supportive home environments and for some, incorporating social media into their projects at this time is just not a good idea.”

Toivanen herself, alongside other arts educators, is finding support in an online group dedicated to sharing solutions for arts instruction under COVID-19.

“The group is a beautiful expression of the ingenuity of my fellow artists,” Toivanen said. “Being a creative problem-solver comes handy at this time of global crisis.”

Conservatory

This type of creative problem-solving is mainstay in how Conservatory instructors are adapting to online instruction.

Dr. Michelle Alexander teaches voice in the Conservatory in tandem with her roles as vocal coach and accompanist.

Alexander’s diction class will be taught via Zoom for the remainder of the semester. Because her class doesn’t require instruments, Alexander said, this shift to online instruction may be less challenging for vocalists than for those in the performance division (i.e. percussionists).

According to Alexander, when it comes to finals in the Conservatory, ensembles, orchestras, and any other recitals are canceled. In lieu of final performances, Alexander said that one option these students have is to “take an incomplete, and we’ll let them come back and perform in the fall with no money penalty.”

Like Drew and Toivanen, Alexander is mainly concerned with supporting her students through this time.

“Students are worried about money, they’re losing their jobs, and that out-

weighs concerns about school,” Alexander said. “This is just a pretty unusual and extraordinary time, and people are dealing with it the best they can.”

For Lindsay Davis, UMKC Theatre professor of costume design, learning how to use Zoom for online instruction was challenging.

“I consider myself a technophobe, almost to the point of being a Luddite,” Davis said.

Davis now views it as an opportunity to reconnect with past students while he adapts his classes. Davis said that his online classes will have essentially the same format as they did before.

According to Davis, the only major change is that his rendering students, who usually work independently, will work on their projects while connected via Zoom.

Davis also heads the MFA Costume Design program, and after mastering Zoom, invited his former MFA students to what he called a “virtual cocktail/costume party.” He and his former students plan on making their Zoom chats a weekly tradition, “something fun” to do while waiting out COVID-19.

Michael Blake, Conservatory professor of modern dance, said that the “dance department is leaping into the unknown on multiple fronts.”

According to Blake, dance instructors are working to find solutions to the issue of inaccessible performance spaces considered essential in their students’ education.

“Dance classes need unobstructed spaces with specialized flooring, and for many classes, a ballet barre is required to fulfill the needs of the discipline,” Blake said. “Most of our students will not have the luxury of a dance studio if they are sequestered to a home environment.”

For his own classes, Blake recorded warm-up exercises for his students to perform in any space they have access to. Students will record themselves and submit their video and self-assessment materials to Blake for evaluation.

“In this instance is where we find the full range of our creativity,” Blake said, as some instructors are suggesting use of kitchen counters as ballet barres while academic dance courses will use Zoom and become more research-oriented.

“These times are uncharted territory,” Blake said. “We will continue to ask questions, create new methods, and open new doors to understanding new means to dance education in a time of social distancing.”

Student organizations move online following campus closure

Daisy Garcia Montoya

Staff Writer

General body meetings? Cancelled. Conferences? Cancelled. Any other event you had planned for the rest of the semester? Cancelled.

With over 300 student-led organizations, student life on campus took a direct hit when the campus canceled all events for the rest of the year due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Upon hearing the news that events could no longer take place, many student organization leaders felt upset for seniors who would now be left with less time as an active member.

"My heart really hurt for all of the seniors. I've just been thinking about all of them, and some of my best friends, who got their final experiences cut short," said Ali Brandolino, vice president of UMKC Enactus.

Brandolino says that because Enactus' mission as an organization is to solve the most good for the upcoming national Enactus competition, they must adapt to online meetings to continue preparing for the competition.

Krithika Selvarajoo, president of Her Campus at UMKC, agreed.

"I was very upset as I have a good number of seniors who were graduating and have been with us from the very beginning," said Selvarajoo.



Student organizations are moving online in the wake of campus closures. (UMKC)

Others felt that the abrupt closure impacted the goals established for the year.

Gloria Mun, co-president of Asian Students in America (A.S.I.A.), says that the closure prevented the organization from establishing a good foundation in its first year.

When asked how much of their normal routines were disrupted, leaders had different answers.

"My organization and I were

in shock," said Hazem Tariq, president of the Muslim Student Association (MSA). "We didn't know what was going to happen and how long it would last. Now we are meeting virtually on Zoom to plan our next moves."

As students feel the impact of social distancing and the disruption to everyday life, student presidents want to remind them that these are measures being done to ensure the overall safety of society.

"I believe it is our duty to be as safe as possible," said Tariq. "We need to stay safe and indoors these next couple of weeks. I know New York and New Jersey have been hit pretty bad, so we got to do as much as we can now to make sure this does not spread."

Others remind students to connect and check-in with one another, even if it's virtually.

"This is a time where people suffering with mental health is-

sues might feel more isolated," said Selvarajoo. "As an org leader (or even as a friend), it is important to reach out to people and ask them if they are doing okay."

As leaders and executive boards work through the unexpected changes to their plans, they hope to keep the organization's energy strong despite the circumstances.

"People are adapting really quickly to Zoom," said Brandolino. "We have had high attendance, and it's really fun to see faces after being cooped up for a few days alone."

Tariq & Selvarajoo say that their group chats have been active since classes canceled as well.

"We hope to stay connected with our members through Zoom, GroupMe and our social media platform," said Julie Jeong, vice president of A.S.I.A. "We are able to help with social distancing by providing a safe space for connecting with others virtually."

With the closure lasting all semester, student organizations hope to move online and host check-ins, general body meetings and social hangouts on Zoom. A.S.I.A., Enactus, Her Campus at UMKC, MSA, LSU and UMKC College Democrats are among those planning to do so.

For more information on a specific organization's plans for the rest of the semester, check on Roogroups and organizations' social media pages.

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Coronavirus cuts UMKC experience short for international students

Daisy Garcia Montoya

Staff Writer

For many students, this spring semester was an opportunity to study abroad. What no one expected was that a worldwide pandemic would cut that opportunity short.

A group of six Colombian international students, Luis Páez, Alexandra Vega Camelo, Julián Núñez, Daniela Lizarazo, Alejandro Reyes and Hiller Lozano, came to the UMKC as part of the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund, a collaboration between the US Department of State and other nations in the Western Hemisphere. Their experience in the US was soon soured by the coronavirus.

The students, who were from the Universidad Industrial de Santander institution in Bucaramanga, Colombia, traveled to UMKC to learn about innovations with virtual reality and augmented reality for health and wellness.

"The Colombian president wants 'economía naranja' (orange economy), which is cultivating the economy through creative industries such as the arts, journalism, tourism and technology," said Páez. "We got a scholarship to come to UMKC to learn about virtual reality and augmented reality, to develop three projects and present them in Colombia."

Through the partnership, the students participated in a seminar and a research-creation practicum to learn the skills needed to design and develop augmented and virtual reality applications.

Just as they were enjoying classes and participating in student life, the virus came to end it. When asked about their experience at UMKC, Páez and Camelo only had good things to say.

"It's been a very pretty and fun experience. UMKC is very multicultural," said Páez. "It allows you to be involved in



From Left: Alejandro Reyes, Julián Núñez, Hiller Lozano, Alexandra Vega Camelo, Luis Páez, not pictured Daniela Lizarazo

sports and different organizations, and their laboratories for class are really nice."

"As a person of Latino-background, I was prepared to face racism and discrimination," Camelo said. "I didn't have any encounter of that sort, so that was very good. I've liked it here a lot and it's been a good experience."

Camelo and Páez say they took full advantage of what UMKC had to offer, such as the student union, library and laboratory to study and the rec center to work out. Still, the frustration with the coronavirus situation was apparent.

"I hope that this is over before we leave in May. We want to get back to networking, experiencing the culture and return to

the laboratory. In the meantime, this is an opportunity to get ahead on our studies," said Camelo.

Páez says that although he is frustrated, he understands this is a global issue and something that must be done for everyone's safety. Although the coronavirus ended the normal UMKC student experience, Páez and Camelo say the entire group had a memorable time.

"I feel grateful for this opportunity, even if it was for a short period of time," said Camelo. "Everyone who we met, helped us a lot. This is something I will remember for a long time. I am happy, but I hope we'll be able to enjoy it more."

"I am blessed to have created new life-

long friendships during our time here," said Páez. "UMKC is very open, multicultural and a good university to develop skills for your future profession."

As the situation continues to unfold, the students look forward to going back to Colombia, where they will use the skills learned at UMKC to develop and present three different projects to businesses who could decide to develop them. All three projects involve creating simulators to practice surgeries.

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NEWS

Student entrepreneur hopes to change the payment experience

Tess Hogan

Staff Writer

Brad Starnes, co-founder of the app DivviUp, recognized his entrepreneurial spirit at the age of 10. Now, as a UMKC student majoring in information technology with a minor in business administration, he is turning ideas into reality.

"I've always been, in a way, an entrepreneur," said Starnes. "When I was 10, I was mowing lawns, doing 30 lawns a week. Then, as I was going through high school, my aunt had a website development business, so I quickly taught myself how to do website development and worked for her before moving into my own business."

The app works as a monthly multi-user automatic payment system. This allows roommates or friends and family to share bills on an automatic basis, with multiple payment methods on file.

"Me and a couple friends went to Chicago, and we went to a deep-dish pizza place where we waited probably about an hour and a half for our pizza, and then another 45 minutes to get our check. Come to find out that you couldn't share the bill," Starnes said. "At the time I was the only one who had a credit card that could cover the cost. So it kind of became a way for all of us to put our cards on one file when we



went out to restaurants."

The idea transformed when Starnes joined E-Scholars, the UMKC Bloch School's entrepreneur development program.

"We went through the entire semester of the E-Scholars program. It's open to the community, so I was one of three UMKC students in a class of 15 or 20 people," said Starnes. "Because of the E-Scholars program, we got partnered with the Husch-

Blackwell Law firm, so we are actually one of their pro-bono clients."

Over the past several months, Starnes worked closely with E-Scholars program coordinator, Ben Gruber. "Brad was an excellent student and exactly the type of E-Scholar we try to recruit," said Gruber. "Brad is a gifted, natural problem solver, which is why he was so thorough in his planning and execution, from identifying the problem and exploring potential solu-

tions, to recruiting a team, to designing and building the product; even finding smaller problems his classmates encountered along the way with which he could help."

The app is currently at a patent-pending stage. As a result of the pro-bono status with the law firm, law fees will not begin until they complete the app.

"It kind of helps now at the start-up phase that we're in, not having to worry about \$10,000 or \$15,000 for lawyers," said Starnes.

"Our intent is to have it up and running before the end of the year," said Starnes. "Long-term, our intent is actually to either build it to the point to have enough momentum that we can run the thing ourselves, or get to the point where we have enough behind us that we can sell it out to some company like PayPal, or even have it acquired by Venmo, who's owned by PayPal."

Starnes is now taking extra steps to move the app further. He recently put in his two weeks at his job to focus more time on the efforts of DivviUp. Starnes plans to graduate next December and is hoping the timeline for the app is able to provide direction for his post-grad plans.

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COLUMN

Celebrating Women in STEM: Dr. Neena Gupta

Madalyn Weston

Staff Writer

Mathematics is an exciting and competitive field. Though it's been around for centuries, the many unsolved problems continue to allow for creative and innovative techniques, as well as fame and fortune. For example, the seven Millennium Prize problems come with a million-dollar prize for the solution (only one has been solved so far). Last year, woman Mathematician Dr. Neena Gupta solved one of algebra's great unsolved problems: the 70-year-old Zariski Cancellation Problem.

Gupta was born in 1984 in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), India. Even from a young age, she loved math. She said, "I was not the kind who got full marks in maths but I just loved to solve problems and spend hours doing maths." Her mother

taught her until Grade X (the equivalent of high school in the U.S) and she completed her schooling at the Khalsa Model Senior Secondary School. She went on to graduate with honors in Mathematics from Bethune College, a women's college in Kolkata. For graduate school, she attended the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), completing a master's in 2008 and a Ph.D. in algebraic geometry in 2011.

After graduation, Gupta became a visiting scientist at ISI Kolkata, followed by a fellowship at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai. In 2012, she returned to ISI Kolkata after winning an "Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research" (INSPIRE) assistant professorship by the Indian Department of Science and Technology. In 2014, she reached associate professor status.

2014 was an important year for Gupta. Not only did she reach the next level of the tenure track, but she also solved one of the

world's greatest math problems: the Zariski Cancellation Problem. This problem was posed by Oscar Zariski in 1949. Gupta describes it like this: "The cancellation problem asks that if you have cylinders over two geometric structures, and that have similar forms, can one conclude that the original base structures have similar forms?" The Indian National Science Academy awarded Dr. Gupta the Young Scientists Award for her solution, describing it as "one of the best works in algebraic geometry in recent years done anywhere."

Gupta won countless awards and honors for her innovative work in Algebraic Geometry. In 2013, she won the Saraswati Cowsik Medal from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. In 2014, she was awarded the Swarnajayanti Fellowship by the Indian government, as well as the Ramanujan Prize from the University of Madras. In 2015, she won the A.K. Agarwal Award for the best publication by

the Indian Mathematical Society. One of the most valuable awards she earned was the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) Prize in 2019. The SSB Prize—the most prestigious prize in India for science and technology—is awarded by the Prime Minister of India and includes a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh (over \$6,500 U.S.) and an endowment of ₹15,000 (around \$200 U.S.) per month until the age of 65. Gupta is the youngest person and third woman to win the prize for mathematical science.

Are you interested in empowering women in the STEM fields? The Women in Science (Wi-Sci) group wants you! Email President Emily Lerner (emily.lerner@mail.umkc.edu) for more information.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

'Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness' review

Luke McKiddy

Staff Writer

As the world huddled in their homes, quarantined in the hopes of curbing a modern-day plague, one piece of media broke through the malaise. "Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness" arrived on Netflix and introduced the world at large to Joe Exotic, Carole Baskin and a host of other denizens from the seedy underbelly of privately owned big-cat zoos.

I'd seen a few friends on social media posting about a new Netflix documentary. Immediately I imagined the likes of "Making a Murderer," "FYRE: The Greatest Party That Never Happened," and "Bikram: Yogi, Guru, Predator." Coaxing my wife to sit down and



(Cosmopolitan)

watch it with me, I found myself a bit underwhelmed by the first episode. Yes, there was some interesting information about the kind of individuals who owned, raised, bred and sold exotic animals, but it just seemed like some trashy people who owned a bunch of tigers.

It wasn't until the end of the

second episode that I was truly hooked. That was when Joe Exotic asserted that rival tiger zoo operator, Carole Baskin, had fed her previous husband to her tigers. In the moment, I took this as just the kind of cruel statement a man like Joe Exotic would make. Then, it turns out, the entire next episode was dedicated to the very real possibility that Baskin had actually fed him to her tigers, or buried him beneath a septic tank, or pushed him out of a plane, or ground him up in an industrial meat grinder. Or, just as likely, her former husband had faked his disappearance and started a new life in Costa Rica.

From that point on, "Tiger King" became a twisting journey of depravity, egomania, violence, drug use, cult-like big-cat-based sex harems, presidential and gubernatorial election campaigns, and tigers. It truly is a wild ride,

like a Cohen brothers' film, dropped for being too farcical.

Aside from the story itself, the aspect of the series I was most struck by was the editing. This story takes place over the course of decades, with many different events and numerous perspectives coming together to weave a tapestry of bumbling criminality. The documentary is aided by the fact that Joe Exotic aspired to stardom, and so filmed nearly every moment of his life for years in the hopes of landing a reality TV show. However, through it all, there was a very clear sense of time.

The interviewer did an incredible job keeping every point self-contained. Each person being interviewed kept their comments on the subject of that moment in the story without any suggestion of the surprise that was hurdling towards the viewer, until it made its

violent collision.

And this happened over and over. Without spoiling details, it's hard to put into words the kind of out-of-left-field occurrences that take place. Just to list a few, there are arsons, cults, drugs, conspiracies, and in the end, there is still a question of if it was all a setup.

No one involved comes out unscathed. And it is incredible to try to wrap your head around the interconnectedness of each player that comes on the scene. The final credits reveal one more feline empire crumbling in a way that suggests that the story ended only because the documentarian left. This leaves the viewer with a feeling that, given another six months, there would be an entire new sub-level to the basement that was revealed beneath rock bottom.

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