



Announcement from the Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dear Students,

I am sure that the recent news of COVID-19 cases at KAUST has caused concern and apprehension for you and your families. In as little time as my message to you all a few days ago, more changes and adaptation have been required of us. In this period of ongoing challenge, I would like to take this opportunity to once again reassure you all that we are doing everything possible to keep our students and our community safe and healthy. Furthermore, as you do your part to follow the directives issued by the University, pursue your academic advancement remotely online, and reach out virtually to those around you to offer support, I want to express my great appreciation for your patience, understanding, and flexibility throughout this ongoing and still evolving situation.

As I am sure you are aware, these times require a balance between focused and determined hard work and understanding self-care. Work continues, but there is latitude for flexibility and common sense when needing to care for yourselves and family members. Your health and well-being are essential in dealing with this crisis and continuing forward in your academic successes. It is easy to recognize the impact of obvious losses such as physical classrooms and access to your labs. In contrast, it may be more difficult to recognize the impact of subtle losses such as the removal of your daily routine or the disappearance of the countless spontaneous interactions with others that grounds a sense of connectedness and sparks curiosity and inspiration. As such, throughout this process, I once again encourage you to reach out and stay connected, physically distant but socially close. I encourage you to reach out to your advisors and faculty members, to your peers and colleagues, to support programs such as the Health Wellness and Counselling HWC@KAUST.EDU.SA, and to your friends and family.

I know the recent news is difficult news, but I have the greatest confidence that as a community, our challenges will bring us closer together and inspire us further.

In a recent address to KAUST Faculty, President Chan “reminded of the legend of Issac Newton discovering the law of gravity and the theories of optics and developing

calculus, while he was 'home quarantined' 350 years ago. Isaac Newton who was then a 22-year-old student was sent home by Trinity College, Cambridge, because of the London Great Plague." President Chan concluded that Isaac Newton "should serve as an inspiration for all of us!"

Stay safe and hone your skills; I wish you health and strength,

Yves Gnanou
Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs