

Confirmed Outcomes of the IARU Presidents' Hotline June 2020

The IARU Presidents' Meeting took place online in the first week of June. The Presidents shared information concerning their institution's situation and measures against the spread of COVID-19, and discussed what can be done jointly in the time of coronavirus.

Session 1. Regional Round-up

Presidents shared institutional responses to COVID-19, along with key challenges that remain to be answered. List of key issues that Presidents mentioned were as follows.

National University of Singapore

- Four phases to reopen campuses
- A guideline to safely conduct face-to-face classes
- Self-sufficient zoning on campus
- Contact tracing system
- Remote working of university staff
- Encouragement of telecommuting in research
- Shifts for lab-based researchers

Peking University

- Cloud lectures
- Cloud partnership with international universities
- Cloud graduation to help graduate students with their thesis submissions and oral defenses

UC Berkeley

- Remote instruction and remote work
- Setting up of nine taskforces to plan for the fall semester
- Repopulation of dorms
- Online and in-person hybrid classes
- Financial impact of COVID-19

University of Cambridge

- Campus lockdown
- Crisis management (COVID Gold and Silver Team)
- Efforts to communicate with the wide Cambridge community
- Financial impact
- Careful reopening of campus
- Philanthropic initiative in relation to COVID-19 research

University of Cape Town

- COVID-19 emergency fund
- Vision 2030 and COVID-19
- Challenges regarding sustainability and inequality
- Expanded access of students and faculty to the world via online channels
- Four phases to reopen the campus
- A limited use of university residences

University of Copenhagen

- Social distancing on campus
- Financial impact
- Digital transformation improving both internal and international collaborations
- Contributions to the crisis (just-in-time research that helps the government make the best decisions)

Australian National University

- Challenges preceding COVID-19 (bushfires and hailstorms)
- Cooperation with the Commonwealth and the State to control COVID-19
- Reopening campus with strict guidelines
- Introducing digital and in-person hybrid classes
- Financial impact

ETH Zürich

- Students' high satisfaction with online teaching
- A special fund to support international students who were called back to their countries
- COVID-19 research
- Maintaining collaborative relations with start-ups and the industry relation
- Technological contributions in facing COVID-19: contract-tracing app and respirator
- "New normality" under strict rules

University of Oxford

- Financial impact
- Challenge of operating a university specialized in highly personalized education with social distancing
- Study environment inequalities among students
- Challenges of reopening buildings
- Increasing interest of people and the government in COVID-19 research
- Partnership with industry to produce vaccine
- Increasing recognition of the importance of universities to society

Yale University

- Evidence-based and data-driven decision-making to advance teaching and research
- Continuation of financial aid for students
- People working together across boundaries within the university
- Governor's roadmap for the reopening of the state of Connecticut
- Three scenarios for the fall semester
- Growing acceptance of tech-enabled change in education and work styles

The University of Tokyo

- Online graduation and entrance ceremonies
- Shift to online education and remote working
- Financial impact
- Reopening campus
- COVID-19 Emergency Act Fund
- Preparation to issue university 30-year bond for the first time
- Plan to launch the Center for Global Commons

Session 2. Discussion- Role of IARU universities in the corona/post-corona era

Based on the points raised in the regional round-up, the Presidents delivered their views on the role that IARU can play in meeting the challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic which is expected to last several years as well as in the post-coronavirus world.

Main points are as follows.

Senior Officers will explore how to start (1) the “IARU Virtual Campus” and (2) “Sharing good practices” initiatives, as what IARU can jointly do in the time of coronavirus, when there are fewer opportunities for travel and direct human interactions. The Presidents agreed to get this started as an immediate action by taking advantage of the existing IARU networks, initiatives and resources as well as the collaboration proposal by PKU on COVID-19 and exploring other areas in which IARU can collaborate right away. Instead of pursuing a perfect scheme from the beginning, it was recommended to start by kicking off a couple of pilot programs and improving things as they go.

1. IARU Virtual Campus

1-1) Temporary campus for international students

Is it possible for us to jointly provide existing or new online courses for international students who temporarily returned to their home country and cannot access to their own campus due to travel restrictions?

1-2) New online joint-education programs

Shifting to online education is a great opportunity to offer new international experiences to a wider variety of students who have not been able to participate in traditional student exchange programs for various reasons. From this perspective, is it possible for us to jointly provide existing or new online courses?

1-3) Other international experiences

Is it possible for us to share the information about online events, seminars and symposiums to provide IARU students more opportunities to expose themselves to online international experiences?

2. Sharing good practices

Is it possible for us to share good practice about systematic and operational aspects of online education so that we can effectively improve our current online education system and pedagogy?

This is an attempt to collaboratively improve the research and education environment of each IARU member institution during a few years of the coronavirus era by utilizing online technologies. Although some of the activities that come out of this attempt may turn out solely to be a temporary action, necessary precautions on cybersecurity should also be taken into account.