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Central Mass. community colleges go entirely online

By Sam Bonacci and Grant Welker

Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester and Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner moved all classes online and ceased all face-to-face instruction for the rest of the semester.

QCC announced Thursday it would move courses online and close all in-person services to students and the public until March 27. The college will transition current in-person classes to what it calls remote learning opportunities and instruction to finish out the semester. Some class starts will be delayed as a result. The college is still finalizing procedures for student assistance services such as the QCC Food Pantry and Resource Center and internet access.

MWCC has announced similar measures.

All face-to-face instruction will transition to online learning and employees will shift to remote access work for normal business hours. The school's campuses will be closed to the public for in-person services until further notice, according to a notice on the college's website. All public events for the school have been canceled through April 10, after which time they will be re-evaluated.

The community colleges join a slew of local schools making the call to cut in-person interactions in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Nichols College in Dudley said it would postpone its May 2 graduation ceremony, which would have been held at Worcester's DCU Center. It is instead planning a virtual event to take place that day.

Most other colleges have yet to take that step.

College of the Holy Cross has said on its website that plans for the May 22 ceremony are not yet called off.

"While we can't know for certain, we expect to move forward with Commencement and Reunion Weekends and we will communicate those plans as soon as they are finalized," the school said.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute has said it will decide how to proceed with its commencement plans at the end of March. The event has been scheduled for May 14 and 16.

Others have not yet said whether they plan to hold graduation events as planned, including: UMass Medical School, whose ceremony has been scheduled for May 31; Clark University, which was scheduled for May 17; Assumption College, which was May 12; or Worcester State University, which has been set for May 16.