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 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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Lucas Cuni-Mertz  
Editor-in-Chief

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

lac2m2@mail.umkc.edu

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

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 Biology, is trying 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. 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 campus closure, with four remaining for the rest of the semester.

“Very lucky that this didn’t happen at the beginning of the semester,” Drew said. “Students got a good introduction.”

According to Director of Undergraduate Teaching in the Chemistry 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 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 depart- ment, the challenges of online instruction vary by medium.

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

Gowan, 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 remediying this is by lending out equipment so that students can work from home.

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

According to Alexander, when it comes to final exams in the Conservatory, the school’s recital halls, and any other orchestras 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 back come 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 school,” Alexander said. “This is just a pretty unusual and extraordinary time. People are changing the way they do things, adjusting to it with the best they can.”

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

“I consider myself a technophobe, almost to the point of being a Luddite,” Davis said. “Being a creative problem-solver always comes handy at this time of global crisis.”

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 onerously, 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 they called a “virtual cocktail/costume party.” He and his former students plan on using Zoom chats a weekly tradition, “something fun” to do while waiting out COVID-19.

Michael Blake, Conservatory professor of modern dance, said that for “dance” depart- ment 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 consid- ered essential in their students’ education.

“Dance classes need combination and 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, or a space that is appropriately set up as 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 for Blake to evaluate.

“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 aca- demic dance classes will use Zoom and become more research-oriented.

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

MARCH 31, 2020
Student organizations move online following campus closure

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 Pérez, Alexander Vega Camelo, Juan Núñez, and Camila Lizarraga, 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 Javeriana in Bucaramanga, Colombia, traveled to UMKC to learn about innovations with virtual reality and augmented reality for health and wellness.

“The Colombian president wants ‘economia natana’ (orange economy),” which is innovation 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 learn about virtual reality and augmented reality, to develop three projects and to learn about virtual reality and augmented reality, to develop three projects and to learn about virtual reality and augmented reality.

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

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 (M.S.A.). “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 president Tariq said that there are measures being done to ensure the overall safety of society.

“I believe it is our duty to be 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 need to do as much as we can to make sure this doesn’t spread.”

Others remind students to connect and check-in with one another. “It’s a time where people suffering with mental health issues might feel more isolated. It’s important to speak up,” said Tariq.

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 Brando. “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 cancelled as well.

“We hope to stay connected with our members through Zoom, GroupMe and our social media platforms,” said Julie Jenq, 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, HPR Campus at UMKC, MSA, LSU and UMKC College Democrats are among those planning to do so.

For more information on a specific organization’s plan for the rest of the semester, check on GroupMe and organizations’ social media pages.

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Coronavirus cuts UMKC experience short for international students

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Brad Starnes, co-founder of the app DivvyUp, 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 moving boxes, doing 30 lawn a week. Then, as I was going through high school, my aunt had a website 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 multi-user automatic payment system. This allows customers, the many unsolved problems continue to allow for creative and innovative thinking. As the world huddled in their homes, quarantined in the hopes that Baskin had actually been ground him up in an industrial blender, 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 firms now.”

Over the past several months, Starnes worked closely with E-Scholars program coordinator, Ben Gruber. “It 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’s come through his planning and execution, from identifying the problem and exploring potential solutions, 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 firms will not begin until they complete the app. “I think it helps now at the start of an automatic payment system,” he said. “We’re taking time now to design and execute the timeline for the app is able to provide direction for his post-grad plans.”

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