



PIERCE COLLEGE CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLANNING AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Faced with the emerging COVID-19 epidemic, beginning in February 2020, Pierce College mobilized quickly to coordinate the college's response. The Incident Command System (ICS) team was activated on Friday, March 13, consisting of the Chancellor, Presidents, the Executive Team, communications staff and other key leaders.

This team met daily to assess the rapidly evolving crisis and make decisions in the best interests of the entire college community. The Executive Team also met more frequently to respond to changing conditions and plan for future contingencies.

The ICS leadership team adopted these guiding principles in their decision-making:

- Follow guidance from public health authorities in Washington state and Pierce County to ensure the safety of the college community.
- Maintain learning outcomes for students, with emphasis on equitable access for all students.
- Minimize financial impacts to students and employees.

The team committed to providing frequent, transparent communications with students, staff, faculty and the public. Those communications are ongoing as we head into the 2020 fall quarters and the budget planning process for the 2020-21 academic year.

MOVING TO REMOTE WORKING AND VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION

Based on guidance from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, on March 17 (the end of winter quarter), we transitioned our staff to primarily remote operations with a skeleton crew of employees on campus.

We moved quickly to create a special employee information center on the Intranet, "Pierce@Home," covering such topics as tips on working from home and how they can access technological support.

Intranet, Pierce@Home

We sent daily emails to all employees beginning March 23, when Gov. Jay Inslee issued Stay at Home orders, with ongoing updates, then reduced the frequency of emails to several times per week as needed beginning in early April. We archived all employee emails on the Intranet.

Topics covered included:

- Health tips during COVID-19
- Telework protocols and FAQs
- Information on Families First Coronavirus Response Act, Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act and Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act.
- Closure of Dental Hygiene Clinic; Child Development Centers to remain open
- Reminders of College Civility Policy and the need to guard against COVID-19 related stigma directed at any person or group of people.

We announced the decision to transition to 100 percent virtual instruction for Spring quarter on March 19, following Governor Inslee's March 23 Stay Home, Stay Healthy orders. All instruction was/is provided through the secure Canvas platform.

The college provided secure access for employees to Zoom and Skype as a virtual meeting platform. Some departments used Zoom to create virtual workshops and to meet one-on-one with students. We also created Pierce College-branded Zoom meeting backgrounds for staff and students to download.



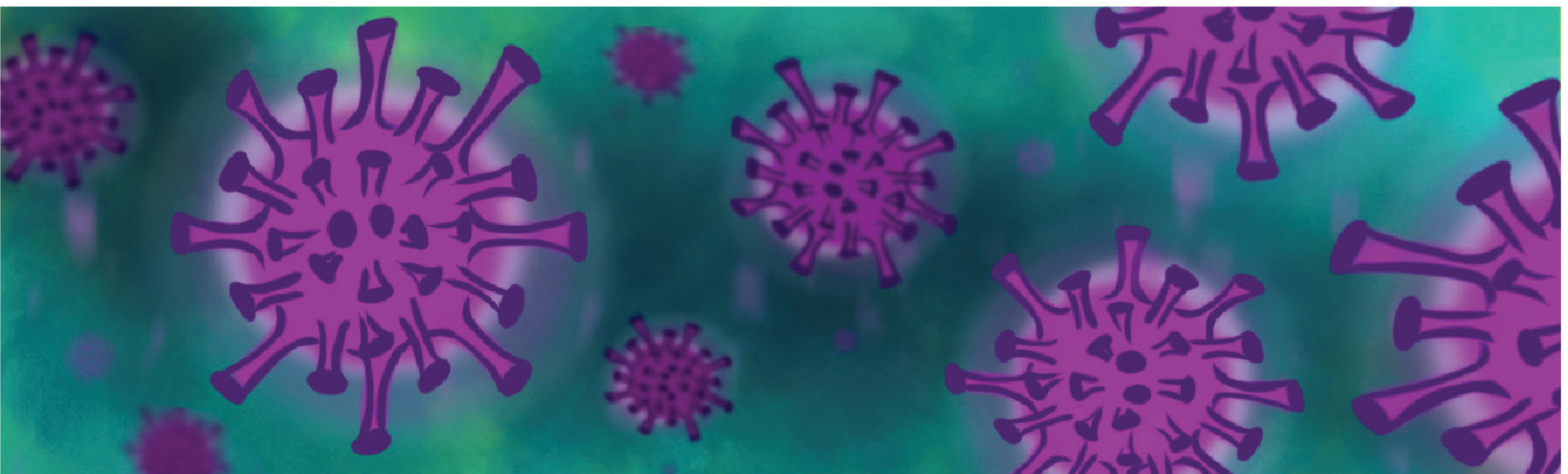
Zoom Meeting Backgrounds

On May 6, we announced that Summer quarter will be 100 percent virtual as well. Fall quarter will remain primarily online, with the exception of three approved programs: Nursing, Dental Hygiene and Emergency Medical Services.

STUDENT SUPPORT

To support and retain students during this transition to virtual instruction, we took these actions:

- Created a [COVID-19 Information Center](#), featuring a [Zoom video message](#) from Chancellor Michele Johnson, to reinforce the notion that the college remains open to serve students, but in a new virtual environment. This section of our website also features an archive of email messages sent to both students and employees regarding COVID-19. We also included details on the college's response to the pandemic, as well as our protocols for keeping the college community safe. In an effort to give the site a more friendly feel, we created a hand-drawn illustration to use as the banner image.



Hand-Drawn Illustration

- Mailed a postcard to all new students who had applied but had not enrolled, with information on Spring quarter.

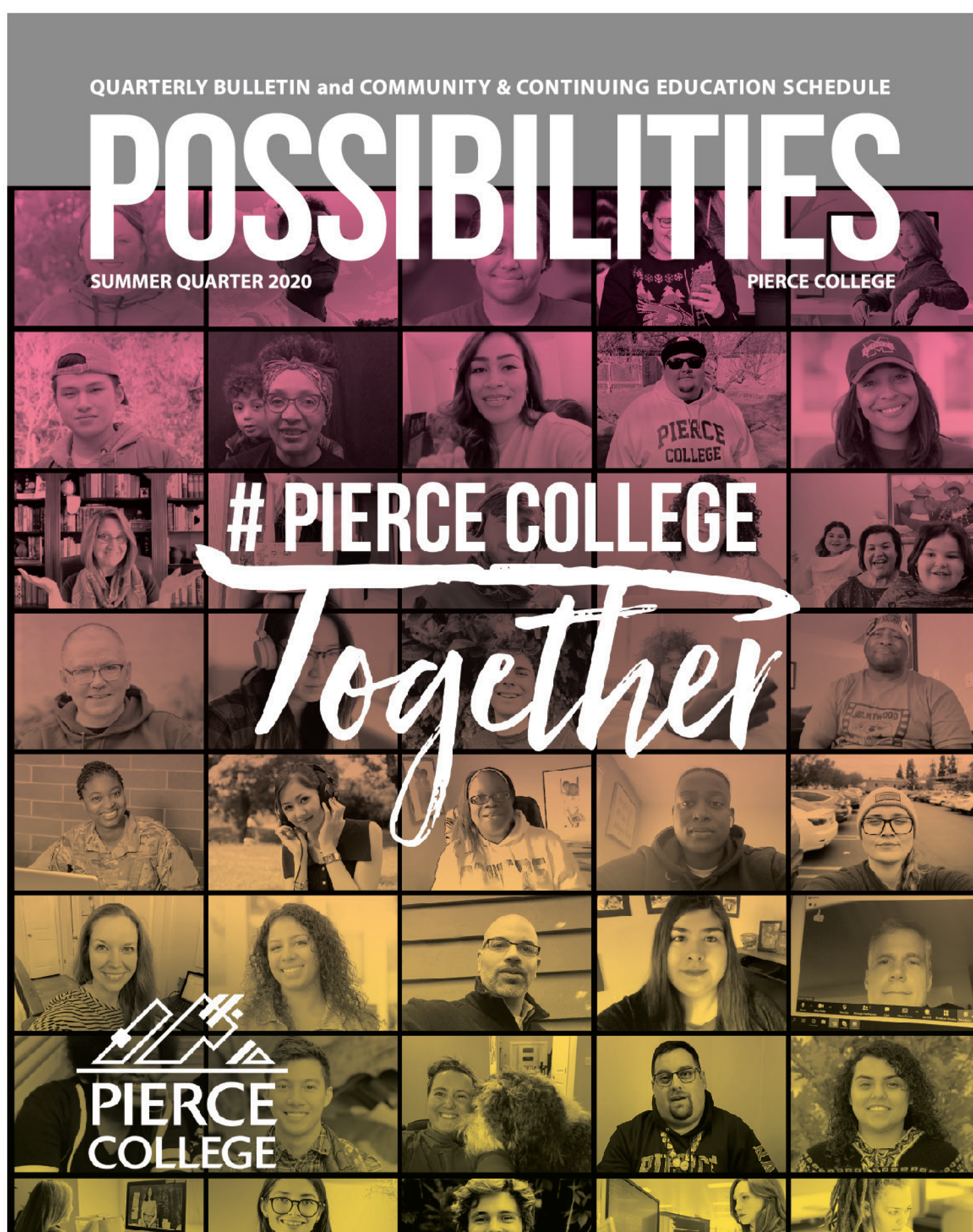
	<p>PIERCE COLLEGE possibilities. realized. 9401 Farwest Drive SW • Lakewood, WA 98498</p> <p>Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Tacoma, WA Permit No. 57</p> <p><i>Get started at Pierce College today!</i></p> <p>THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW TO GET READY TO ENROLL:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Locate your acceptance email from the admissions office. This email contains your student ID (SID) and Inquiry Pin. 2 Log into your student portal at my.pierce.ctc.edu and follow the steps in the new student guide. 3 If you applied for financial aid, you can review your status by logging into your financial aid portal at www.pierce.ctc.edu/financial-aid-portal. If you need assistance with funding, please check out www.pierce.ctc.edu/pay-college. <p>Please be sure to check your student email regularly for important updates.</p> <p><i>Questions?</i> Fort Steilacoom: fsentryadvising@pierce.ctc.edu, 253-964-6705 Puyallup: puyentryadvising@pierce.ctc.edu, 253-840-8431 JBLM: JBLMRegistration@pierce.ctc.edu, 253-964-6567</p> <p><small>Pierce College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, perceived or actual physical or mental disability, pregnancy, genetic information, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, creed, religion, honorably discharged veteran or military status, or use of a trained guide dog or service animal in its programs and activities. For inquiries regarding compliance contact the Pierce College Office Title IX Coordinator, 253-964-6511 9401 Farwest Drive SW, Lakewood WA 98498. This publication is available in alternate formats on request. Please contact Access & Disability Services, 253-964-6448 or ADSupport@pierce.ctc.edu.</small></p>
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- Created [12 Canvas video tutorials](#) for students on virtual instruction.
- Created the [Student Support Center](#) section of our website, featuring information on accessing virtual classes, getting help with technology, support services, FAQs, basic needs resources and applying for CARES Act funds.
- Held nine interactive student workshops.
- Completed a “Call Every Student” campaign, reaching 4,000 current students by telephone in the two weeks prior to the Spring quarter for a personal check-in to answer their questions and assess their needs for support. A second calling campaign is currently in progress, to check in with students who attended spring quarter, but have yet to register for fall.
- Created a Running Start book loan and books for veterans services through the Library and bookstore. Provided free shipping on books ordered online through the College Bookstore.
- Posted updates on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for students on how to access classes and support services.
- We created a [Virtual Welcome Desk](#) via Zoom, staffed five days a week with employees who are able to answer questions and connect students with the support services they need.
- Emailed a survey on March 26 to 8,373 students asking about their needs for support services and equipment they may need to be successful in a 100 percent virtual environment. 2,825 students responded.
- Designed our [quarterly bulletin](#) around our new virtual learning environment, with an emphasis on the services we continue to offer, and how we can help those who have been financially impacted by COVID-19. The cover featured Zoom images of happy employees and students across the college – working and learning from home.





- Held parking lot drive-by event on April 8 during which 351 students came to both campuses. At this event, volunteer staff distributed
 - 271 Chromebooks
 - 9 laptops
 - 9 calculators
 - 214 wi-fi hotspots
 - 9 piano keyboards
 - Planned several “return equipment” events
 - Finalizing elements of a large Chromebook order to distribute to more students fall quarter.



- Created more than 10,000 branded Pierce College face masks, to be given away for free to employees and students when campuses reopen.



- Provided 67 students with \$200 in Financial Aid funds for Internet access.
- Expanded Wi-fi access to parking lots at Fort Steilacoom and Puyallup and informed students that they could access the Wi-fi from their cars if needed, while observing social distancing guidelines.
- Continued to offer weekly food banks at both campuses through Nourish Mobile Food Bank.
- The 2020 commencement ceremony scheduled for June 19 was converted to virtual, with students able to pick up caps, tassels and certificates on campus through drive-up events.

The Pierce College ICS team continues to meet several times a week as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. The Executive Team meets frequently to monitor the situation and consider the best ways to help our students be successful in the midst of these unprecedented times.