Good morning Olin community,

It has been a week of unprecedented change and activity at Olin and around the world. We didn’t know, one week ago, that by today many students would have departed or would be preparing to depart campus, that faculty would be preparing to teach remotely, and that many staff would be working remotely. **COVID-19 is now a pandemic**, per the World Health Organization. Last night, **Governor Baker ordered** K-12 in schools in Massachusetts to close, banned bars and restaurants from allowing eat-in service, and banned gatherings of more than 25 people. Unprecedented events call for unprecedented responses, and we would like to emphasize one response in particular that is especially critical.

We have shared information before regarding **social distancing**. While many of us have been trying to implement preventive measures such as frequent handwashing and avoiding handshakes— and we should continue those— much of the information we have about this virus, in particular based on its trajectory in Italy, tells us that this week is a critical one for **flattening the curve**. Olin has joined many other colleges, businesses, and school districts in closing or moving operations online in order to help with this effort. However, we are aware of concerning things happening on campus in the form of gatherings of groups and people not maintaining distance from one another. While much of this will decrease or resolve over the next couple of days as more people depart campus, we wanted to emphasize the importance of taking social distancing very seriously.

We urge everyone to read the following:

**This article** by Asaf Bitton, MD, MPH, of Ariadne Labs, explains why strict social distancing is vital to slowing the spread of COVID-19. In practice, this means:

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Avoid in-person contact with people who are not part of your household. (If you are a student still on campus, consider your room/suite your household.)
- If you must go out, maintain a distance of six feet between yourself and other people. **No touching**.

It may not be possible for everyone to do the first two, but the last one is crucial, and we can and should do it.

**This visual simulation** from the Washington Post shows how social distancing, especially extensive distancing, can spread out the rate of new infections and avoid the worst outcomes.

It is not fun to have the semester disrupted, to spend most of our time at home, and to avoid activities and events we enjoy. But this is an opportunity to help all of our fellow citizens, especially the most vulnerable. We hope to see everyone at Olin rise to the occasion this week and beyond.
Wishing you all the best as we adjust to this new reality,

The CHRT