



Panorama

Positive News for a Positive Community

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News in Brief



World

Coronavirus cases rising across Africa

As of Sunday, March 22, the number of Coronavirus cases across the African continent has surpassed 1,200. So far the confirmed incidence of the disease in Africa has been relatively small - almost 1,200 cases and more than 30 deaths, compared with a worldwide total that has reached more than 305,000 cases, with more than 13,000 deaths. Many African countries imposed restrictions including closing schools and social distancing to prevent the disease from spreading.



Nation

Maryland passes more funding for HBCUs

On March 15, the Maryland Senate passed a bill to provide \$580 million to the state's four Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The four universities - Bowie State, Coppin State, Morgan State and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore -- will receive the additional funding over the next decade. The bill was passed unanimously by the Senate. It had previously passed in the House of Delegates by a vote of 129-2. The legislation is aimed at ending a long-standing lawsuit by the HBCUs accusing the state of underfunding its HBCUs.



State and Local

Two state legislators announce retirement

Two long serving Charleston County state legislators have announced they will retire upon completion of the current legislative session. Hollywood Rep. Robert Brown and North Charleston Rep. David Mack say they will not seek re-election in November. At the end of the session Brown will have served House District 116 for 20 years. Mack will have served House District 109 for 24 years. They will remain in office until newly elected representatives to the districts are installed.



Sports

Former SCSU star to join Philadelphia Eagles

The Eagles have signed former Steelers defensive tackle Javon Hargrave to a three-year, \$39 million deal that includes \$26 million guaranteed. This will make Hargrave the highest-paid nose tackle in the NFL. Hargrave, 27, stands 6-foot-2 and weighs 305 pounds. During his four years in Pittsburgh, Hargrave started 52 of 63 games while recording 14.5 sacks. Hargrave, a SC State Bulldog, was drafted by Pittsburgh in the 3rd round in 2016.

Operation Exodus

The Coronavirus outbreak left Benedict College with over 400 students stranded on campus. A massive effort was needed to get them home.

By Nate Abraham Jr.

EXCLUSIVE

It is often said that how a person reacts in times of crisis reveals who they really are. That adage also applies to institutions as well.

Benedict College's response to the worldwide Coronavirus outbreak revealed that the phrase "Benedict Family" is more than just a saying. It is the core of what the institution is all about.

To stop the spread of the virus, colleges and universities all over America decided to extend Spring Break, initially giving students an extra week away from campuses. With the rapid rise in the number of people affected by the outbreak, institutions of higher learning decided to empty their campuses and require students to complete their studies online.

But at Benedict College, this was a problem. Over 400 students remained on campus during the Spring Break. Many, including some foreign students, had no way to get home. This presented a major challenge for Benedict College President Dr. Roslyn Clark-Artis, who has led the college for only 30 months.

"Benedict College observed Spring Break from March 8th through the 13th," said President Artis. "During that period, we began to experience the spread of the virus throughout the United States. We therefore extended our Spring Break through March 23rd. We added an extra week to the Spring Break to afford our faculty the opportunity to come back to campus and to develop comprehensive learning plans to move instruction into an online or virtual format."

Although some courses at Benedict were available online, many were not. Benedict's faculty launched a massive effort to make every course available for remote learning within a week's time.

"We offer a number of online courses at Benedict, but did not have complete programs online," Dr. Artis recalled. "Some of our faculty did and some of our faculty didn't. So it was critically important that they get back and engage in some in-service training and establish a comfort level with the technology to be able to effectively deploy fully online classes beginning on March 23rd."

While the faculty worked overtime to prepare their courses for remote learning, the administration had to figure out how to help the 400-plus students still on campus -- including foreign students who faced severe obstacles in international travel.

"We were in an untenable position of having slightly more than 400 students on campus during Spring Break, students who perhaps were international or who had an internship," Dr. Artis recalled. "I had one student who was a page at the State House. Some had opted to stay behind during Spring Break to pursue those and other interests or just take a break -- a staycation here on campus."

"So when we extended



Benedict College President Dr. Roslyn Clark-Artis

the Spring Break, we began to contemplate plans for the complete evacuation of the campus, recognizing that we were headed toward a complete closure," she continued. "At that point, we also understood very quickly that many of our students would not be financially capable of moving in short order. Benedict students are overwhelmingly about 84% Pell Grant dependent -- not eligible, dependent. These are students who could not go to school but for the Pell Grant. We knew that these students were not in a position to move quickly to purchase plane tickets and things of that sort."

Dr. Artis turned to the Benedict family to help, starting with its board of trustees.

"On Sunday (March 15), I reached out to my board of trustees and tried to sensitize them to the unique issues that our students were facing," Dr. Artis said. "We discussed the number of students we currently had on campus, the likelihood that the campus would need to remain closed, and difficulties associated with staffing. I had to be concerned with our staff and faculty and their safety as well. Do you allow students to stay? Do you ensure that all students go? Those decisions for me were really driven by a couple of things. If you have students, here you have to have staff here. You have to have food service providers here. If we think about how to contain a pandemic, food service in a cafeteria full of students isn't the best way to do that. And so, considering all of those factors, we made the decision to effectively clear the campus. To do that, we needed help from our board and our community to provide financial subsidies for students who could not otherwise afford to travel quickly."

The call went out, and the Benedict family responded.

"I will tell you, the response was absolutely overwhelming," Dr. Artis recalled. "My board immediately stepped in and stepped up. My chairman overnighted a check for \$10,000. One board member

personally booked 45 plane tickets for students. In fact, we're dangerously close to being 100% for participation in terms of either donation of frequent flyer miles, cash or other income assistance that the board members provided."

Other members of the community stepped up.

"We continued our fundraising efforts, beginning with our board, expanding into our community and then ultimately to our alumni and all of our constituents to support our students," said Dr. Artis. "The Columbia Chapter of the Links, of which I'm a member, was very gracious. They dropped off a check for \$4,000 on Monday morning to help."

"We were overwhelmed by the generosity and the commitment of the constituents of Benedict College," she continued. "We were able to purchase over 90 plane tickets for students. All told, we assisted 124 students with travel subsidies or assistance. That could have been plane ticket, bus ticket, or train ticket. We ran 24-hour shuttle service to the Columbia, Charleston and Charlotte airports, as well as to Amtrak and the bus stations for our students. Whether we bought the ticket or whether they bought the ticket, we provided transportation and travel assistance. We had students who did not have appropriate luggage to board a flight. We provided some luggage. Some students simply didn't have a bag that could be checked at the airport. So we purchased bags for students that could be checked. We had one particularly generous trustee who brought over literally envelopes full of cash to be distributed to students. Our neediest students, who needed gas money or who needed food while they were traveling, we were able to offer them a cash subsidy. Some who have chosen to remain in the Columbia community but did not have access to food, we offered a cash subsidy to those students."

After Dr. Artis' initial call was issued on that Sunday,

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COVID-19 Coronavirus

Visit <https://www.carolinapanorama.com/news/coronavirus/> for continuous Coronavirus updates.

SBA offers Disaster Assistance to South Carolina Small Businesses Economically Impacted by the Coronavirus

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to South Carolina small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza announced. The disaster declaration makes SBA assistance available in the entire state of South Carolina.

"SBA is strongly committed to providing the most effective and customer-focused response possible to assist South Carolina small businesses with federal disaster loans. We will be swift in our efforts to help these small businesses recover from the financial impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19)," said Administrator Carranza.

SBA Customer Service Representatives will be available to answer questions about SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program and explain the application process.

"Small businesses, private non-profit organizations of any size, small agricultural cooperatives and small aquaculture enterprises that have been financially impacted as a direct result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) since Jan. 31, 2020, may qualify for Economic Injury Disaster Loans of up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses which could have been met had the disaster not occurred," said Carranza.

"These loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can't be paid because of the disaster's impact. Disaster loans can provide vital economic assistance to small businesses to help overcome the temporary loss of revenue they are experiencing," Carranza added.

Eligibility for Economic Injury Disaster Loans is based on the financial impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The interest rate is 3.75 percent for small businesses. The interest rate for private non-profit organizations is 2.75 percent. SBA offers loans with long-term repayments in order to keep payments affordable, up to a maximum of 30 years and are available to entities without the financial ability to offset the adverse impact without hardship.

Applicants may apply online, receive additional disaster assistance information and download applications at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance. Individuals who are deaf or hardofhearing may call (800) 877-8339. Completed applications should be mailed to U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155.

The deadline to apply for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan is Dec. 21, 2020. For more information about Coronavirus, please visit: [Coronavirus.gov](https://www.sba.gov/coronavirus).

For more information about available SBA resources and services, please visit [SBA.gov/coronavirus](https://www.sba.gov/coronavirus).

Churches shut down



Pews sat empty in churches across the Midlands on Sunday as most churches shut down or broadcast their services online to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. The 7th Episcopal District of the AME Church announced that over 600 AME Churches in South Carolina will be closed through March 31. Most Baptist churches, such as Brookland Baptist (pictured above) were also closed, as well as AME Zion churches such as Jones Memorial AME Zion (pictured below). During a journey around Columbia last Sunday, Presbyterian, CME, Catholic and United Methodist churches were also closed. Please visit [CarolinaPanorama.com](https://www.carolinapanorama.com) for a complete list or to add information about your church.

