

## Is A-State Ready To Go Fully Online?

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR



Lily Cabibi-Wilkin is a sophomore music composition major from Hot Springs.

A week ago, Arkansas' first coronavirus patient tested positive in Pine Bluff. Since then, the number of cases has leapt exponentially, and we've gone from "testing online procedure for two days" to "online for two weeks after spring break" to "online for the rest of spring semester after spring break" in what feels like both a matter of seconds and a couple of months.

While the university is doing its best and we are all operating with the information we have, there are issues with what's already been planned and implemented. Here are three major problems I see:

### The Internet

Last week saw many students on campus attempting to register for fall classes. It also saw many of those students relaying their struggles with registering.

"My wifi over in the Quads ended up dropping right before midnight and left me with no choice but to attempt to register on my phone using my data," said Ashlee Hill, a junior elementary education major from Piggott, Arkansas. "I had three bars and 5GE and pages were still taking five minutes or more to load."

"I had three bars and 5GE and pages were still taking five minutes or more to load."  
- Ashlee Hill

"Midnight came, and the website wasn't working at all, said Chardaesha Boatwright, a junior radiology major. "It finally let me log in, but then it went back

to page not loaded. I got frustrated and never did register for classes. I know that the classes that I needed are full."

It's not uncommon for webpages to break when too many people attempt to use them at once. On Oct. 1, 2013, the Obamacare health insurance shopping website crashed when "as many as 250,000 people had tried using it at once, much greater than the planned capacity, the inspector general said in its report. By the end of the day, only six people were able to submit an application and select a health plan," according to an article from The Morning Call. According to US News, A-State has a student population of 13,709. Admittedly, that's a much smaller number, but when everyone is using the internet (and possibly video chatting, which takes up a bit more bandwidth) things are still going to be slow. I've used my phone data all semester because AstateSecure runs so poorly on my phone that it's not even worth turning on all the time. I certainly don't expect it to run any better when the whole campus is using it.

### Classes That Can't Go Online

This problem is entirely based on my major. How do you teach a music class over Skype? How do you conduct a choir that has been told not to come to class? Teachers in A-State's music department are trying to figure that out. While classes like music theory can be taught online, other classes, like choir, are completely canceled.

"As with all classes at the university, the A-State bands will shift their delivery method to protect the safety and welfare of our students, and by extension, their families and friends," said Dr. Timothy Oliver, director of bands. "Currently, we have three concert bands that rehearse and perform during the spring semester. A concert scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, was rescheduled for Friday, March 13. We are exploring ways to combine other concerts scheduled throughout April so that they may hopefully take place before the end of the semester."

Dr. Ryan Sullivan, director of choral activities, is looking into ways to still educate choir students, even if their ensembles are effectively canceled. "In order to honor your commitment and tuition for your ensemble, following spring break we will begin a regular but limited endeavor to learn about choral repertoire through listening and reflection. The goal is for this to be

meaningful exposure to the world of choral music," he said in an email shared with students.

Before the announcement that all classes would be online for the remainder of the semester, he had planned on having a combined choirs performance on April 21 to make up for the cancellation of the Concert Choir and Chamber Singers concert scheduled for April 7.

"We have really creative faculty that's willing to work with students even if we're all having to do it from our living rooms."  
- Beth Robinson

The situation is still fluid and I was not able to get a statement from the chair of the music department in time for the physical production of this story. Further comments will be posted online as I receive them. However, I was able to speak to Dr. Marika Kyriakos, the former chair of the music department, and Beth Robinson, the administrative specialist of the music department.

"I think this is a time that all of us need to think very selflessly from all perspectives," Kyriakos said. "Helping one another to stay safe while providing the best education possible under the circumstances is key."

Robinson was optimistic about plans to move online. "I think the faculty is for the most part being really proactive and planning for ways to still be able to teach students and respond to student needs the best way they can. Most faculty in our department already have systems in place via Skype or FaceTime or other ways that they interact with their students to still be able to do lessons, and classes can usually be done remotely. We already have a lot of that going on. We have really creative faculty that's willing to figure out the best way to still be able to work with students even if we're all having to do it from our living rooms."

Of the music students I spoke with, all of them said they felt "pretty safe" on campus, but mentioned concerns about the future. "I have noticed panic about what is to come and how we are going to stay on track with a four-year plan," said Noah Wright, a sophomore music performance major from Ash Flat, Arkansas.

Leyandra Snyder, a sophomore

music performance major from Boise, Idaho, agrees. "We're all on the same page of wanting to know what's gonna happen next." Snyder and Gabe Waters, a sophomore music education major from Bloomfield, Missouri, have both expressed concerns about returning home for spring break.

Despite classes being online, many music students simply have no other option but to come to campus. "I have nowhere else to practice," said Waters. Other students, like Victoria Brownhill, say they will do most of their practice on campus, but still attempt to practice at home. "I'm going to ask my landlord if it's alright if I practice during set hours during the day," said Brownhill, a sophomore instrumental music education major from Searcy.

### Dine or Dash?

That brings me to my third point — campus will still be open. According to official correspondence sent by Dr. Kelly Damphousse, "residence halls, computer labs, the library, student health center and counseling center, and the cafeteria will continue operations." This is a really gray area. On one hand, closing down all of these resources can have severe consequences for those who don't live in Jonesboro, who don't have food or technology in their dorms or who have physical and mental health issues. On the other hand, what's the point of moving class online to cut down on the spread of viruses if everyone is going to be mingling in the cafeteria anyway?

The Acansa Dining Hall and Wigwam Dining food court are still open and running. In the dining hall, all food stations have been changed so that nothing is self-serve. Aside from the shame of having to look a cafeteria worker in the eye and ask for mayo with my fries (a punishment far less than what I deserve, I'm aware) and the significantly longer wait time for salad and pasta, I think this is a good idea.

But it doesn't change the fact that, while you wait in line for food, you're still standing a few feet away from other people. It also doesn't change the fact that, to get your drinks, you still have to touch the nasty Freestyle machines with your bare hands. How often do they wash those?

The more you think about someone preparing food for you the more concerns there are. Yesterday I had lunch in the food court and saw a staff worker walk past my table holding three heads of romaine

lettuce in one bare hand. Impressive, but gloveless. I assume that lettuce was then washed, but I don't know for sure.

If I wanted to avoid something like this, I could go the easy route and make ramen in my dorm, as many others have chosen to do. When I went to Walmart on Monday, the only flavors of ramen left were udon and seafood, which my friends and I grabbed since there was nothing else. The campus store is still open and has been cleared out of all toilet paper, paper towels, ramen, fruit cups, and snack cakes, though staff are doing their best to keep the store stocked.

"We're all on the same page of wanting to know what's gonna happen next."  
- Leyandra Snyder

While, yes, I'm sure we will survive if we stock up on ramen and fruit cups and those ridiculously overpriced pallets of Rice Krispie Treats, is that any way for a human being to live? Am I as a human being meant to spend five weeks locked in a 93 square foot room eating nothing but seafood ramen and CBD-infused candy rainbow belts until I invent a new language with which to communicate with my Furby?

I plan to write a full article on it later, but anyone taking to social media to shame anyone leaving their homes to eat out or go to the beach or have any sort of social interaction needs to have a good long think about how dark and sad the alternative is.

For all of these issues, there's no clear easy fix. The internet on campus has been an issue since the internet was invented (according to an issue of The Herald from 2001), so that's not an overnight fix. Music classes are tricky to do online, but are they worth the risk of infection? We can't feasibly quarantine every single student on a campus so large, but are we doing enough to stop the virus? All in all, I hope the administration keeps these issues in mind in their further planning, assuming they aren't doing so already. As the situation evolves and we on campus adjust to being online, I hope we all stay safe and healthy and sane these last few weeks.

For full interviews, please find this story on [theherald.home.blog](http://theherald.home.blog).

This will be the last physical copy of The Herald for the Spring 2020 semester. All subsequent copies of The Herald can be found at [theherald.home.blog](http://theherald.home.blog).

# THE HERALD

KRISHNAN COLLINS: EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
krishnan.collins@smail.astate.edu

TUCKER PHILLIPS: NEWS EDITOR  
heraldnews1921@gmail.com

BRADLEY BREWER: SPORTS EDITOR  
heraldsports1921@gmail.com

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN: OPINION EDITOR  
heraldopinion1921@gmail.com

ALEX CLARK: LIFE EDITOR  
heraldlife1921@gmail.com

HANNAH RISKER: PHOTO EDITOR  
heraldphoto1921@gmail.com

SOOK YOUNG YOO: ONLINE EDITOR  
heraldonline1921@gmail.com

SANDRA L. COMBS: ADVISER; ADVERTISEMENT SALES  
scombs@astate.edu  
astateherald@gmail.com

THE HERALD OFFICE IS IN ROOM 224 OF THE COMMUNICATIONS/EDUCATION BUILDING.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Story ideas or news tips may be emailed to [heraldnews1921@gmail.com](mailto:heraldnews1921@gmail.com). The Herald welcomes comments, criticisms or ideas that its readership may have. We encourage you to send a Letter to the Editor to [melissa.palumbo@smail.astate.edu](mailto:melissa.palumbo@smail.astate.edu).

### EDITORIAL POLICY

Opinions expressed in personal columns are those of the writers and may not reflect the opinions of the staff as a whole.

These opinions are not necessarily reflective of the students, faculty or administration at A-State.

Columns, letters to the editor, cartoons and other content on the opinion page are the views of the author. Content does not necessarily represent the opinion of The Herald.

### STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The Herald is printed every Wednesday during the semester, except during finals and holidays. Copies of The Herald are free.

### CORRECTIONS GUIDELINES

The Herald wants its news reports to be fair and accurate. We correct all errors of fact. If you know of an error, please contact us.