A. The Pandemic Plan is intended to guide the College in preparing for and responding to a pandemic outbreak to minimize the impact on students, faculty, and staff. The objectives of the Plan are:

1. To protect the lives, safety, and health of all students, faculty, staff, and visitors at every Gaston College campus.

2. To effectively communicate with all involved parties throughout the duration of a pandemic.

3. To provide for the continuation of as many College operations and services as possible as long as it is safe to do so.

4. To try to prevent the spread of infection through health and hygiene education.

B. During a pandemic, the following should be assumed in the application of this plan:

1. The state of North Carolina is likely to have minimal resources available for local assistance. Gaston and Lincoln County authorities will be responsible for county-based response plans.

2. Direction may come from the NC Public Health Department and/or local (Gaston and Lincoln County) health departments to close schools, public events, restrict travel, and quarantine areas.

3. It is likely that needed vaccines and antiviral medications will be in short supply for a long period during and after an outbreak.

4. There may be long periods of class cancellations, campus closings, and an increase in student, faculty, and staff absenteeism.

C. Pandemic Plan Coordination:

1. This Pandemic Plan is designed to work in conjunction with local pandemic plans. A copy of this plan will be presented to the Gaston County Health Department, Lincoln County Health Department, Gaston County Emergency Management Office, and Lincoln County Emergency Management Office.
2. Gaston College’s plan shall be subordinate to all local, state, and federal pandemic plans.

3. Authority:

   a. Gaston College will modify operations to comply with all Federal Government Response Stages, the World Health Organization Phases, and all federal, state, and local directives.

   b. The Gaston College Pandemic Plan will be authorized by the President of the College or designee. The Campus Emergency Resource Team (CERT) will be activated as appropriate. The CERT is comprised of the following members or designees as appropriate:

      (1) President of the College
      (2) Chief of Campus Police
      (3) Vice President of Finance, Operations, and Facilities
      (4) Vice President of Student Services
      (5) Vice President of Academic Affairs
      (6) Vice President of Economic and Workforce Development
      (7) Director of Facilities Management/Plant Operations
      (8) Assistant Director of Plant Operations/Maintenance Supervisor
      (9) Director of Marketing and Public Relations
      (10) Director of Emergency Medical Services Education
      (11) Director of Regional Emergency Services Training Center
      (12) Director of Human Resources and Safety
      (13) Chief Technology Services Officer
      (14) Dean of Health Education
      (15) Dean of Kimbrell Campus & Textile Technology Center
      (16) Dean of Lincoln Campus

   c. The President or designee may appoint additional members to the CERT as appropriate.

D. Roles and Responsibilities:

   Essential personnel and critical functions should be identified early in the planning process to keep the College functioning, and to prevent avoidable structure damage during campus closings. In planning to respond to a pandemic, the focus should be on preparing for extended interruption of College activities on all campus locations.
1. Campus Emergency Resource Team (CERT)

   a. The CERT will be responsible for monitoring and disseminating the most up-to-date pandemic information from the Gaston and Lincoln County Health Departments and other public health sources.

   b. During the early stages of a pandemic, the CERT should consider action plans in response to information provided by state and local authorities on how and when the pandemic is suspected to affect the Gaston and Lincoln County areas. In conjunction with the Public Relations department, efforts should be made to educate the College community on ways to stop the spread of the pandemic.

   c. Should normal College operations be interrupted, the CERT may participate in key decisions regarding how the College will resume normal operations, based on information from the local and state public health authorities. Adjustments to the College calendar and other scheduled events will be made as appropriate.

   d. In the event of a pandemic that causes issues such as financial hardship, loss of family or loved ones, and health issues, the CERT will evaluate the need for psychological counseling and crisis debriefing for those affected.

2. Campus Police

   a. The Chief of Campus Police is responsible for the overall coordination of the College’s emergency response. Campus Police are responsible for determining the type and magnitude of the emergency, establishing an emergency command post as necessary, and maintaining contact with the President (or designee) and members of the CERT. As appropriate, Campus Police will notify and coordinate efforts with local public authorities such as fire, police, and emergency medical services.

E. Communications

   1. The College’s Public Relations department, or designee, is responsible for all internal and external communications associated with a potential or actual pandemic. In conjunction with Campus Police, the Gaston College Emergency Notification System (LYNX) will be activated as appropriate. Other
communication mediums may include postings to the Gaston College website and bulletin board postings.

2. Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff have a responsibility to stay informed about any emergency information from the College and to provide that information to their students and visitors as appropriate. If a pandemic situation occurs, faculty and staff will be expected to follow the recommendations issued by the College.

3. Science Department Faculty and Staff

As appropriate, Science Departments may need to shut down in-process chemical activities and store chemicals in proper locations. It should be assumed that fume hoods will be out of operation at some time during the pandemic.

3. Students

Students have the responsibility to stay informed about current events and take necessary steps to ensure their personal safety and health. If a pandemic situation occurs, students will be expected to follow the recommendations issued by the College.

4. Maintenance and Housekeeping

During a pandemic, maintenance personnel will be expected to maintain campus facilities as appropriate. Attention should be given to maintaining critical operations such as boilers. Operators must be prepared to operate the boilers safely using all fuel types. Housekeeping personnel may need to implement additional infection prevention activities in key areas of the campus.

F. Executive Council

In the event of a pandemic, the Executive Council may need to consider the following:
1. Identify key positions with high risks of exposure and take appropriate actions.
2. Develop policies and procedures for absences related to the pandemic.
3. Restrict travel to places tied to the pandemic outbreak.
4. Establish partnerships with healthcare facilities to provide services for employees.
5. The potential increase in demand for information technology services.
6. Plans to ensure continuity in maintaining the essential operations of the College, including payroll, ongoing communication with employees, students, families, security, and maintenance.

7. Review policies for employee and student sick leave absences unique to the pandemic.

8. Review policies for employees and students suspected to be ill or who become ill on campus. Consideration should be given to whether or not the employees and students with a suspected illness should remain on campus.

9. Address any potential fear and anxiety of employees, students, and families.

10. Develop policies and procedures for emergency action such as regulation waivers concerning matters such as reducing the required hours of instruction and determining if a semester should end early.

11. Develop a recovery plan to deal with the consequences of the pandemic including, but not limited to, loss of students, loss of staff and faculty, financial and operational disruption, issues related to tuition payment and refunds, withdrawal policies, and registration.

G. Academic Programs:

In the event of a pandemic, there may be long periods of class cancellations, campus closings, and significant increases in student and staff absenteeism. If this occurs, as appropriate, the Executive Council will seek input from groups such as the Academic Council, Deans and Directors of the Economic and Workforce Development division, and Faculty and Staff Senates. Items for consideration may include the following:

1. Cancellation of classes and/or other college events.
2. Closure of campuses.
3. Contingency plans for maintaining laboratories.
4. Developing and disseminating alternative procedures to assure continuity of instruction in the event of campus closures. Consideration should be given to alternative methods such as web-based distance instruction, the use of social networking and micro-blogging services, mailed lessons and assignments, and instruction via local radio or television stations.
5. Developing guidelines for students to complete necessary coursework including final exams, the submission of grades, or other methods for course completion.
6. Developing a policy or guidelines to address academic concerns of students absent from classes due to illness or quarantine.